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Winifred West

Blanche Mary Channing

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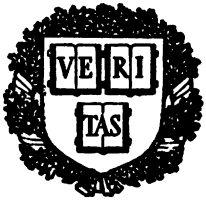

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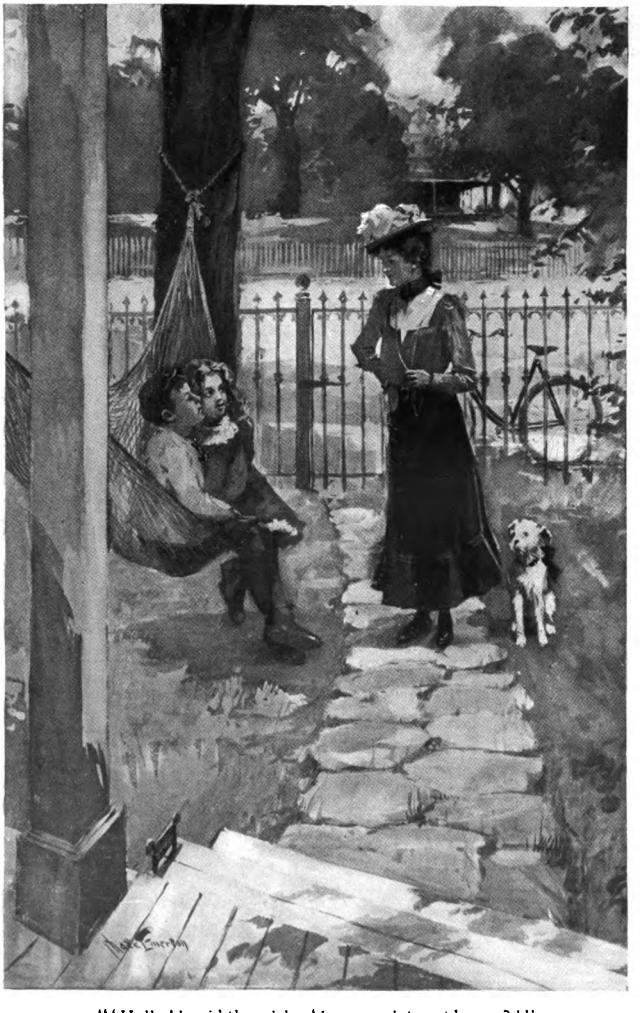

"'Hullo!' said the girl—'is your sister at home?'"

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WINIFRED WEST

A STORY

By

BLANCHE M. CHANNING

Author of "Zodiac Stories," etc.

With Illustrations by

CHASE EMERSON

W. A. WILDE COMPANY

BOSTON AND CHICAGO

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Jun 1901. 12

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WINIFRED WEST.

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To

ELIZA CHANNING HIGGINSON

This Book

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WINIFRED WEST.

CHAPTER I.

Westholme.

"IT is called 'Westholme' because it's the home of the Wests! We got the idea out of a book; don't you think it's fine?"

There were five young Wests, and one of them was very sure to ask this question of any stranger sooner or later. The visitor always smiled and agreed, and the children were confirmed in their view.

Westholme was not at all a handsome house, inside or out. It needed a new coat of paint everywhere, particularly on the stairs, which had once presented the appearance of

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black walnut, but now, under the continual tread of busy feet, little and big, showed in a hundred bare patches the original light wood of which they were made.

Such busy feet as they were! Father's, hurrying off to answer the summons of a patient, — for Dr. West was the only physician in East Village, and much in demand; mother's, going down to help Lucinda in the kitchen, and up to find out why Baby was crying, and down again to see the poor neighbor who wanted the recipe of the cake she had sent to the church sociable, or to ask the doctor's wife what she ought to put on Billy's burnt arm; Hal's feet, in heavy boyish boots, dashing off to school, and up, three steps at a time, on the return trip; Ethel's and Sidney's, up and down, all day long; a running patter or a sturdy little stamp as Baby Mollie went after, or pursued her independent way; and the quietest step in the household — Winifred's.

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Winifred was thirteen, or, as Lucinda said, "goin' on fourteen"; and was the eldest girl, just two years younger than Hal, who was as tall as his father, the doctor, and looked at least a year older than his real age.

Hal did not consider himself one of the children at all, now, and held and laid down freely, many original opinions regarding the right treatment of the little ones, to their strong disapproval. But the person whose opinions mattered most, next to their parents', and who had the greatest amount of influence with the lively little people themselves, was Winifred—or, as the children called her, Freda,—who was best able to manage them. Indeed, Freda was her mother's right hand, which means that she was a very busy little girl indeed. From the moment she got up in the morning to the moment the three youngest children were put to bed, it seemed as if there were something which she, and she only, could do. There was some-

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body to dress or wash or mend up or tell stories to or do something for; not to mention her own lessons for Miss Burchard, who was a very particular person.

Only sometimes, at the end of the afternoon, when school was over, and there was no more mending on hand requiring immediate attention; when the baby (they still called her "the baby" though she was nearly three years old) was safely bestowed with mother or Lucinda, and the other children were out of doors,—then Winifred might go up to her own room for an hour before supper and do the one thing she loved best of any in the world — play on her violin!

Lucinda, "the one woman," who was a person of decided views on all subjects, and who always made a point of saying what she thought of people, had declared over her wash-tub one morning that:—

"You might work yourself wild for a

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thousand years, but you couldn't make folks no different from the way they was." And when Mrs. West, who happened to be near, asked what she had in mind in making the remark, Lucinda replied that she was thinking about Freda.

"Freda," went on Lucinda, lathering away fiercely, "is a real good girl to work; none better; but any one can see her heart ain't in sewin' nor dustin' nor shellin' peas. She's got that kind of a fur-away look in her eyes that shows she's thinkin' of somethin' else, an' all the time she's doin' her work, she's jest a-longin' an' a-pinin' to be at her music!"

And Lucinda spoke truly. Winifred was always "longing for her music"; always wondering if she could ever become a great musician by and by.

For it was not an easy thing, as Freda very well knew. There must be hard study — years, and years of it; long hours of

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practising every day; and one could never be a great musician unless other things were laid aside to give the more time to music. And when the girl thought of all the things she had to do every day, and of how impossible it was to lay them aside and give the time to the brown old violin that lay in its shabby case on the top shelf in her closet, she would sigh a wistful little sigh.

One afternoon Freda sat mending stockings, with the big mending basket that seemed never empty on one side of her, and Baby Mollie on the other. Dr. and Mrs. West were out paying visits together, Hal was off on his bicycle, and Ethel and Sidney playing in the garden with a small neighbor, Judy Barnes. Mollie had been out with them, but had presently wandered in in search of "sister," and finding sister sewing, had declared: —

"I goin' stay wiv you an' sew too!"

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"That's a good girl," said Freda; "here's your stocking." For one particularly dilapidated old sock of Dr. West's was always kept at hand for the little girl, who had a real liking for needle-work, though a very peculiar way of working.

"All wight," said Baby, cheerfully, putting her tangled curls back from her face with two remarkably brown little hands, and watching Freda thread a needle with a stout and very long double thread.

"We goin' to be d'edful busy, aren't we, Fweda?" she asked, with a laugh of pleased anticipation.

"Dreadfully; and how surprised mother will be when she comes back!"

Baby laughed again still more gleefully.

"What will muvver say?" she asked, pulling the thread through the blue woollen sock at full length of her tiny arm.

"Mother will say — '*What* a lot my baby has done to help me!'"

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"An' what will faver say when he puts on his s'ocking what I made all nice an' new for him?"

"What do *you* think he will say?"

Mollie considered with her pretty head on one side.

"I t'ink he say, 'Come an' I kiss you!'"

"Yes, I think so, too," agreed Freda, smiling.

It was amusing to have Molly for a companion, but not exactly helpful as regarded getting through quickly, for that long double thread was used up very soon — which would seem strange if one did not know that Mollie's stitches were some half an inch long, and over and over a thick mass of stocking, bunched together in a fashion not commonly used by stocking-darners. Then her needle would unaccountably lose itself, despite the double thread; and once or twice she would hold up a pricked finger to be pitied and com-

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forted; so that all things considered, the mending took a half hour longer for her assistance.

But the longest lane has a turning, and the longest task gets done some time; and by and by Freda rolled up her last pair of stockings and put them in the basket.

"There now, Baby," she said, "we won't sew any more to-day. Give me your work — yes, darling, it's wonderfully done, I see — and now run out into the garden and see where Ethel and Sidney are!"

But Molly stood still.

"Where you goin'?" she asked suspiciously.

"Sister is going upstairs now."

"You goin' up'tairs into you room?"

"Yes; run out and find the others, and then —"

Mollie interrupted with another question: —

"You goin' to play you *bi-lin?*"

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Winifred gave a patient sigh. "Yes, dear, I'm going to play on my violin. And now Baby can go and find—"

But Miss Baby had her own ideas of what she wished to do. She set one small foot on the stairs in front of her sister.

"I go hear you play dat bi-lin," she said firmly.

A momentary look of vexation came into poor Winifred's face. It was pretty hard if at the end of a long day of honestly done distasteful duties, she could not be allowed an hour before supper to herself.

A hasty denial was on her lips; but she checked it.

"Very well, Baby," she said gently, "you can come if you will be very, very good, and not make a noise. Will you promise?"

Mollie put back her curls again with her little hands so deeply browned by sun and wind.

"Ess," she replied, "I pwomise!"

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Winifred's room was in the ell at the back of the house which had been built on when Dr. and Mrs. West found that if the family was to grow, the house had got to grow too. It was an attractive room — the most attractive of all the bedchambers at Westholme, — for it had three windows, and received the full blessing of the morning sun. One window looked up the street, with its white-painted, green-blinded houses and overarching elms, to the old church; the second commanded the garden; and the third — where the first sunbeams entered — gave a lovely view across the meadows to the blue hills on the horizon. It was by this window that Freda always stood when she played on her violin.

Somehow, though she had never put the idea into words, she felt as if the distant hills and the music had something in common.

The furniture of the room was old and

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dark — the heavy, solid mahogany furniture which Dr. West had inherited from his parents and grandparents. The bureau had a fine white linen spread on it, but none of the silver-topped boxes, and cut-glass bottles, and china trays and knick-knacks which most girls possess. Freda's brush and comb (not of silver and tortoise-shell, but much plainer materials) lay there, and a tiny pincushion made like a tomato, stood behind them; and there was a flat candle-stick of turned wood. Above these simple arrangements hung a quaint looking-glass, with a frame of gilded pillars, supporting a little gilt cornice, and enclosing a highly colored picture of three red roses and two gigantic pansies, in a blue vase.

The walls were papered in narrow blue stripes, with moss-rosebuds between at regular intervals. Freda had two pictures in her room of which she was very fond: one a crayon of her mother at about her own

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present age; the other, a beautiful photograph, brought her by an aunt from Italy, of a little angel playing on a mandolin. Her one regret concerning it was that he had not preferred the violin.

And now, Mollie following close at her heels, she went to get down from its place of safety on the high shelf, that one supreme treasure, her own musical instrument.

It was an old violin; any one who knew anything about violins could have told that at the first glance; and any one knowing anything about violins, knows also that the old ones are the best. And if, furthermore, that person could have held Freda's instrument against his shoulder and drawn the bow across the strings once or twice, he could have told something more — namely, that it was a valuable, and a rarely valuable violin that the girl owned. It was given to Freda by her father on her eighth birthday,

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and it had been left to Dr. West by a strange old man who had drifted into East Village, nobody ever knew whence or why, and who had been one of the doctor's many poor patients, — the sort of patient to whom the good doctor — so poor himself — never had the heart to send in his bill. The old man had said one day, as he lay ill: —

"You will find when I'm gone that I've remembered you, doctor," and the words were understood when, after the funeral, a long, tightly tied package was brought to Dr. West, and being opened, disclosed the old violin lying on its faded red velvet cushion inside the worn black leather case.

"I wouldn't wonder," said the doctor to himself, "if it was a good one." But he had no notion of how good a one it was.

He had put it away and forgotten about it. Winifred had been only six at the time, and though she had always shown a great love for music, had never yet so much as

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seen a violin. But the year following, a new organist had come to the Episcopal church — a young man from New York; and it became known after a while that he could play other things beside organs. As Dr. West walked by his lodgings one summer night he heard the strains of a violin, and stopped to listen.

"That fellow plays well," he said to himself; and when one evening the young organist came to supper, the doctor went upstairs and got out his own violin, and brought it down.

"Here's something I want your opinion on," he said to Mr. Lane. "You can tell me if this is a good instrument or not."

Mr. Lane took the old brown object and examined it carefully. Then he laughed, and his face as he looked up at the doctor was flushed. His eyes were very bright.

"Well?" said Dr. West. "Is it any good?"

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The young man laughed again, very softly, passing his hand tenderly over the violin strings, as if stroking the hair of a child.

"Any good?" he repeated. "My dear sir, you could not duplicate this instrument easily; it is almost worth its weight in gold!"

Then he told the name of the maker — a name all musicians know and love — and though Dr. West, not being musical, was not familiar with it, he saw that he had something rare and precious in the old patient's legacy.

"And now I must hear my violin," he said. "It will not talk for me, because I do not know its language, but it will for you."

So the young man tuned the strings that had lain silent so long in the dark, and presently, softly — softly, like some one waking out of sleep, the violin began to speak. And by and by it was not speaking, but singing;

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and two of the people who heard understood the song which only sounded sweet and strange to the rest; one was the young player, who had forgotten where he was; and the other a little girl, who had crept to his side, and whose great brown eyes never left the bow and the hand that passed it across the quivering strings. And when at last it ceased to move, a little voice said: "Oh, don't stop! Let it sing again!"

When they looked at Winifred her face was quite pale, and in her eyes there were tears — tears of perfect happiness.

So it came about that Mr. Lane often played at Dr. West's, and by and by, seeing how Winifred loved the violin, Dr. West agreed that she should learn how to play on it herself. For more than six years, now, she had studied the most wonderful musical instrument in the world, and only a week before the time when our story begins, Mr. Lane had told Dr. West that

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with such a talent as his little daughter possessed, she should be allowed to give up other things to devote herself to music; that an hour a day was not enough; and that the best thing he could do would be to send her to Boston or New York, to study under a really first-rate master.

But when he heard that, Winifred's father had looked very grave. And he had not told Winifred.

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CHAPTER II.

The Girl at the Hotel.

"SHE is!"

"She isn't!"

"She is too! There—!"

Sidney and Ethel sat in the red hammock under the elm and watched the front gate and some one outside it. The some one was a girl, rather taller than Winifred, who had just got off her bicycle, and leaned it against the fence. As Sidney spoke the last words, she opened the gate and advanced up the flagged path. The children stared at her, saying nothing. Behind her trotted a long-haired terrier with a blue ribbon round his neck.

"Hullo!" said the girl, suddenly seeing

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the two curious little faces. "Is your sister at home?"

"Freda? Yes, she's upstairs." It was Sidney who answered. He was not at all shy.

"Won't you ask her to come down? Tell her, please, that I want to see her." As she spoke the young lady drew out a small leather card-case, and handed Sidney a tiny card on which was engraved: —

MISS ELSA BEACONSIDE.

Sidney looked at the card and then at Miss Elsa Beaconside, and then at the card again. After which he turned himself about and shouted at the top of his lungs — "Freda!"

Miss Beaconside laughed, and sat down in the hammock beside Ethel.

"Isn't he a lazy boy not to call her properly?" she asked. "What's your name, little Blue Eyes?" And she pulled one of Ethel's curls softly.

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Ethel blushed and looked down. She was only six, and much afraid of strangers. Miss Beaconside laughed again.

"You cunning thing!" she cried suddenly.

A small figure in mussed pink gingham was coming toward them from the house. Its head was a perfect tangle of golden hair, its rosy little mouth was frankly brown with molasses, and its feet were bare. It was Baby. She walked up to the strange girl and smiled in her face engagingly.

"I see'd you," she announced, "an' I comed wight out!"

"So you did! What's your name?" asked the visitor.

"Baby."

"Whose baby?"

"Mamma's baby!"

"Of course. And what's this little girl's name here? She's afraid to tell me." Poor

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Ethel bent her head still lower, and blushed still deeper. Baby regarded her a little contemptuously.

"Her's Effel," she said; "her's Effel Delamere West; dat's her name."

"Well, you're a nice baby," said the young lady, "and if there wasn't quite so much molasses on your sweet little face, I'd kiss you; as it is — Oh, how do you do? I daresay you are surprised to see me, but I wanted to meet you, and as you didn't seem to be meaning to call on me, I simply made up my mind to call on you!"

The last part of her sentence was addressed to Winifred, who had meanwhile come downstairs. Winifred looked almost as shy as her small sister Ethel, while the stranger poured out the easy greeting. She was wondering why the beautifully dressed "Girl at the Hotel" (that was what Hal called her) had wanted to meet her, and

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wondering how she could entertain her now that she had come.

"Won't you — won't you come into the parlor?" she asked nervously. That was what Mrs. West said to callers. But Miss Beaconside laughed and shook her head.

"Now, don't go and treat me that way! We're not stupid old grown-up ladies! How old are you? I'm fifteen and a half."

"I'm going to be fourteen in September. Ethel — Sid — run and bring two chairs for sister, please!" The children ran to obey.

"Only as old as that! I'm disappointed; I thought you looked older; but it doesn't matter. We can be friends if we're not exactly the same age. Have you a horse? Do you ride? Oh, you have a bicycle? Well, then we can ride together — though I like my horse best. I've got the sweetest horse you ever saw! I'll come and

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take you out in the Meadowbrook with him some day. When can you go?"

"I don't know," said Winifred; "I have so much to do — Baby! Go to Lucinda and ask her to wash your face and put on your shoes and stockings."

"No," said Mollie, "stay here!"

"You can come back, darling, but you must have your face clean first."

"All wight," — and the little pink figure ran off to the house.

"Isn't she sweet!" said The Girl from the Hotel. "How many of them are there?"

"Three little ones. Hal is the eldest of us all; he's older than I am."

"Oh, yes — that great, tall boy who rides past the Hotel on his wheel. I've seen him with you, too. Well, I should think you *would* be busy if you have to take care of them all!"

"Oh, I don't — I only help my mother

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do it; but there's a good deal to do. Sid — don't you want to go and tell mother that Miss — oh, yes! tell her Miss Beaconside is here?"

"Oh, no," cried Miss Beaconside, "I wouldn't bother her for anything. I just came to see you. Why, hullo! Blue Eyes and Bobs have made friends!"

Winifred looked, and there was the terrier curled up in Ethel's lap.

"He likes me," said Ethel, softly.

"He certainly does. And he doesn't like every one. Now, don't you feel as if you could like *me* a little?"

"Yes," said Ethel, drooping her head till all the curls fell over her face. Sidney laughed. "Ethel's such a goose!" he cried. "She's 'fraid of people, an' thunderstorms, an' spiders, an' 'most everything! I wouldn't be afraid for the world!"

"She's not afraid of Bobs," said the young lady; "and she and I are going to be

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friends. *You* aren't too busy to go to drive in my pretty cart with Flashlight, my bay horse, — are you, Ethel?"

"No," said Ethel, peeping through her hair with eyes like stars.

"Oh, but you must come! You really must!" Miss Beaconside said, turning back to Winifred. "If you have too much to do in the morning, you can be spared in the afternoon, late, can't you?"

Winifred gasped. Give up her hour with her violin? Not for a drive in the Pumpkin Coach with Cinderella herself!

"I think perhaps — if mother can spare me a little while — the morning will be best," she said.

"Really? Well, then, I shall come around to-morrow at ten — or eleven — whichever you say, and you must make up your mind to a long drive, and a good talk. I'll be going now, since you are busy. Come, Bobs! Good-by, children."

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"I'll have to ask mother, though," said Winifred. "I don't know about to-morrow."

"Oh, well, I'll come, anyway. If you can't go, I'll take Blue Eyes. So glad I met you! *Good*-by!"

She was gone. Winifred stood looking after her in a maze. How gay and bright and easy-mannered she was! And how shy and stiff and queer she herself had felt! Sidney broke in on her musings with a question.

"Say, she's a stunner, isn't she? What did she come here for?"

"She said she wanted to know me."

"What for?"

"I'm sure I don't know. I suppose there aren't many other girls at the Hotel for her to talk to."

"There are too! There's two girls with red pigtails, and a thin girl with black hair, and a girl with glasses, — horrid, blue glasses — and —"

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"Well, that's enough, Sid. I didn't know you knew so much about the Hotel. Anyway, she must have wanted to come here, or she wouldn't have come."

"Isn't she *beau-ti-ful!*" whispered Ethel on her other side, and Baby, just then returning from the hands of Lucinda, washed and shod, raised a plaintive wail of— "Where's my pitty lady? Where's she gone to?"

At the one o'clock dinner it was all told to the doctor and his wife and Hal.

"Well, that was very nice of her," said the doctor; "I hope you will let her go to drive, Mary? It will do the child good."

"I shall let her go—oh, yes," Mrs. West replied; but something in her voice sounded as if she were not as enthusiastic as her husband.

"I don't really care so much, if you'd rather I didn't, mother," said Winifred.

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"Bosh!" broke in Hal; "the idea of not wanting to go! I just wish I had your chance!"

"I hope she knows how to drive," Mrs. West said thoughtfully.

"Mother! I've met her driving miles from here, and she handles the reins splendidly. I never saw a girl that seemed to have such an idea of how to manage a horse. She rides too. I've seen her riding, and she sits as straight as the side of a house. They're awfully rich, you know. Her father is Bert Beaconside, and they've brought seven horses with them, and three carriages. Elsa has two horses of her own, and her own cart, and her own groom. She learned to ride bareback when she was a mere baby, and she never has a spill."

"You seem very fully informed," remarked Dr. West, dryly; "and somewhat well acquainted. I see you feel free to call Miss Beaconside by her first name."

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Hal grew scarlet, and the children all laughed.

"Well, father, she's only a kid, if you come to that; and the fellows at school all know as much as I do. We all think she's a daisy."

"At all events, I gather that the young lady knows how to drive," rejoined his father, "so your mother need not worry on that score."

But Mrs. West had other reasons for looking a little anxious as she watched the Meadowbrook whirl away with the two girls next day.

Just what good was this new acquaintance going to do her Winifred?

Elsa looked like a pleasant, refined young girl, and her manner when Mrs. West had come out and introduced herself, had been polite and well-bred; but she had been very differently brought up from Freda, and she

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might tell her so much of her own way of life as to make the quiet doings of Westholme seem dull by comparison.

"I hope it will do no harm," she said to herself. "My little Freda has very good sense for her age. I shall know better whether to encourage the acquaintance or not when I hear about this morning."

And by and by, when dinner-time came, Freda was asked to give an account of the drive.

"Why, it was lovely!" she said; "we went by Miller's pond and the long hill, and came home through the woods. Oh, the woods are so *dear* now! I haven't been that way since father took me in May. We picked lots of flowers, but I made Elsa keep them all. She says I am to call her Elsa, because Miss Beaconside sounds silly and stiff."

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"That's just what *I* think," said Hal.

"Didn't you get any berries?" asked Sidney, who was always interested about things to eat.

"And did Bobs go too?" inquired Ethel, in her soft voice.

"Baby going next time!" announced Mollie.

"No, — me!" from Ethel. "She *said* she'd take me!"

"That was only if Freda couldn't go; you know it was!" said Sidney.

Altogether, there was so much chatter that Mrs. West could get no real idea of what manner of girl Elsa was, or what the two had talked about. But later on, she and Winifred had a quiet half hour together over the mending basket, and then she was able to hear more.

"She's a very nice girl," said Winifred; "and oh, so bright! Why, mother, she's away ahead of me at lessons! And she's

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read all kinds of books; and she's been to Europe — just think!"

"And what did she tell you about Europe?"

"About Paris, most of it. Her mother bought her four new dresses in Paris. Elsa is going to show them to me; she's got them here — three of them, at least. I think she cares a good deal about clothes," said Freda, thoughtfully; "more than I do, that is. And she has beautiful ones. But she told me a great many other things, and what I liked best to hear about — all about going to the concerts in Dresden. Just think what music she has heard! The greatest singers in the world, she says, and such *violinists!* Oh, dear — do you suppose I could ever go to Europe too, mother?"

The mending lay forgotten in Winifred's lap; her eyes had their far-away look. Mrs. West glanced at her daughter and sighed softly.

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"We never can tell about the future, dear," she said. "Perhaps, by and by, when Hal is settled in business, and Sid and Ethel are older, your father may feel able to send you with some one. I don't know—"

"Send me! Oh, but I want you and father and the children to go too. I don't want to go away from you, mother. Don't you know that?"

She had thrown the mending aside now, and was kneeling by her mother, her head in her lap. Mrs. West stroked the brown head tenderly, and with a lingering touch, for her husband had told her what Mr. Lane had said about sending Winifred to one of the large cities to study music, and what if it must be done? At least, she told herself, nothing need be decided yet. There was time to think things over thoroughly.

"My little daughter," she said, "I know you don't want to leave us. And we will

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hope you need not for a long time yet. Come, we must finish our sewing, for it is growing late, and you will want to play before supper-time." A reminder that brought Winifred to her feet again, and set her working with a will.

"You love your violin very much, Freda?"

"Oh, mother!" The color rushed into her face. "There's nothing like it!"

"And would you be willing to play in public when you are grown up?"

The girl considered.

"I don't think I should mind — when I could play better than I do now. I don't play very well yet. You see —" she stopped short.

"Yes —?" Mrs. West thought she knew what was coming.

"Well, mother, the truth is, that if I am ever going to play for people and make money — and you don't know how I want

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to make some money to help father and you — I shall have to practise a great deal — oh, *hours!* That's what Mr. Lane says. And you know, mother dear, I don't see how I can, with all there is to do — " again she stopped.

Mrs. West drew another long breath like a sigh.

" Yes, dear, I understand," she said. " Your father and I will talk it all over and see what can be done."

" Mother — you don't think I'm selfish, do you? " The tears stood in Winifred's eyes. " I wouldn't be selfish about it for anything. You know I love to help you, and you know I love Hal and Sid and Ethel and — "

" Love Baby! " cried a sweet little voice in her ear, as two dimpled arms went close round her neck; " love Baby too! "

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CHAPTER III.

An Opening Door.

"HULLO!" said Elsa, as the cart bowled along toward the Hotel on the return from a long drive about two weeks later, "there's Bert!"

Winifred had heard a good deal about her friend's only brother, and so she looked at the back of the young man in front of them with interest. It was a straight, square sort of a back, and somehow looked resolute. It was covered with a short gray coat, and above it was a straw hat, and below it were two white duck legs ending in tan shoes.

"Hullo, Bert!" Elsa called, when they were a few paces nearer.

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"Hullo!" responded the young man, turning round. "Where'd you drop from?"

"Where did *you*, you'd better say! We didn't expect you for a week."

"Never expect me till you see me," said her brother. "I'm a rolling stone; don't know myself where I'll bring up from minute to minute. I'll most likely end as a professional tramp; got it in me, you know."

"Silly!" said Elsa, laughing; "you'll make Freda think you crazy. Freda — my brother; Bert, this is Miss Winifred West, my newest and dearest friend!"

The straw hat was lifted rather lazily, and Freda met a glance of curiosity from two good-tempered gray eyes.

"Well, now you can continue your professional tramping, and we'll continue our drive," said Elsa, gayly; "I'm taking Freda home. See you later, Bert!" and the cart flew past, down the dusty road.

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"Such a boy!" Elsa was saying, laughing and shaking her head; "he was invited to stay with our cousins the Baldwins at Bar Harbor for another week; and here he turns up now! And I know he won't care a bit for this place. Not that I don't think it's lovely, you know, my dear,—but a fellow of Bert's age wants golf and canoeing and things. Don't you think boys are a bore? One always gets on so nicely and quietly without them!"

"I don't know," Freda said thoughtfully. "Of course, they do tease one and make a noise, and track all the mud into the house, and all that—but I like them. I have two brothers, you see, and I wouldn't give either of them up for the whole world. But I don't know about big, grown-up brothers. Does yours tease you very badly?"

"Pretty badly. But he's a nice boy, Bert. And now he's come, I'm going to

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have lots of doings. Don't you think it would be good fun to have a picnic on Gray's Mountain?"

"Oh, yes!"

Elsa had been planning this picnic since morning, when the idea had suddenly occurred to her, and now she propounded her plans to Winifred.

"There won't be a great many to go," she said; "just Bert and me from our family, and Hal and you and Sid and Ethel from yours. The grown-ups would hate it. And your cunning Mollie is too little."

"You aren't going to ask any of the Hotel people?"

Elsa made a grimace.

"No, indeed! There's nobody I ever care to see again. Such tiresome girls, with nothing to say, and such hideous clothes!"

"*My* clothes are not very pretty," said Winifred, quietly. She thought Elsa's way of speaking about the Hotel girls unkind.

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"*Your* clothes, you dear old silly!" answered Elsa, merrily; "who cares what you wear, when you're a dear and a sweet yourself! And oh, Freda — I've a great, great favor to beg of you. Promise you will say 'yes.'"

"Tell me what it is first."

"Won't you promise without knowing? Aren't you careful! Well, I'll tell you. And you must do it; you really *must*, or it will spoil everything."

"Well?" said Freda.

"Well — I want you to bring your violin and play to us!"

Winifred's face flushed. She opened her lips quickly as if to say "no," but checked the impulse, and said instead: —

"What made you ask me?"

"Why, because I wanted to hear you, to be sure. My father was going past your house the other afternoon, and he heard a violin, and stopped to listen, and

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when he came home he said, 'Who is it that plays the violin at the doctor's? They play uncommonly well.' So you see!"

"I don't play well, though. But if you really want to hear me, I could take you up to my room and play for you any afternoon."

"But it would be such fun to have a sort of concert out of doors!"

It never came into Elsa's head that to carry a violin to a picnic on a mountain, with the awkwardly large case to hinder one's climbing, and the danger of losing or hurting a valuable instrument, might be anything but fun to its owner. And as Winifred was silent, she added, "I didn't think you would throw cold water on my plan!"

But Freda had been thinking. If she meant to be a professional violinist when she grew older, must she not get over her shyness and sensitiveness and dread of unwonted

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things? How could she travel from town to town, and stand up before great crowds of strangers, if she had not enough spirit to carry her violin to Gray's Mountain and play for only two strangers? She took her courage in both hands.

"Very well, Elsa," she said cheerfully, "I'll do it."

"That's a darling!" Elsa gave her a kiss. "Now, there's only the day to fix, and we're all right."

They reached Westholme at this moment, and Elsa let her friend out of the cart, and drove off, waving her whip gayly. Winifred, on her part, went into the house with a rather serious face.

"Well, if you haven't brass!" was young Bert Beaconside's remark when his sister told him at supper that she had made Freda promise to carry her violin to the picnic. "I wouldn't be one of your girl friends for

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a farm! To expect that child to drag a thing as big as a coal-hod up a hill in the broiling sun and sling it about all day, just so as to play you a jig at the end! My hat, but you're cool!"

"I don't know what you mean, I'm sure," pouted Elsa. "If you don't want her to carry it, you can carry it yourself, can't you?"

"Brass upon brass," retorted the lad, with a shake of his head; "I'm not in the hod-carrying business, myself."

"*Hod!* Freda would never speak to you if she heard you call her violin such a hateful name. She's perfectly devoted to it."

"Your latest fad, isn't she?" asked Bert, teasingly. "Well, I like her looks; nice, quiet little thing, with big eyes like a fawn's. Don't put on her too much, though. This violin act looks like bullying, to me."

"Mother, isn't Bert mean?" Elsa turned to her mother, a stout and kind-looking

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lady in a dark gray silk dress. Mrs. Beaconside smiled.

"You and your brother always seem to have just so much quarrelling to do when you haven't met for some time. I confess, I don't think it was exactly thoughtful to propose what you did; but as long as little Freda West doesn't mind, I don't see why Bert should."

"Of course not. Mother, can't we go tomorrow? It looks as if it was going to be a nice day, and you know how it has rained just lately. One must snap at a good day."

At the end it was settled that the picnic should be on the next day but one, thus giving more time for preparation, and great were the hopes of all the young Wests for a fine morning.

A fine morning it was, and not too warm; so it was a merry party that set forth in the buckboard which was to carry them to the foot of the mountain, for there was no car-

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riage-road up. The lunch-baskets were to be conveyed to the top by Elsa's groom, and the hands of the rest left free.

Only Winifred was burdened; and Elsa, realizing for the first time that she had been selfish, begged that the violin-case might be tied to one of the baskets on the groom's arm.

Winifred looked at her with a curious light in her eyes.

"My violin — tied to the lunch-basket? Well, no, I think not! I never let my violin out of my sight."

"Oh, but Banks is as careful as he can be. How are you going to get up these steep, over-grown places with that thing in your hands?"

Winifred's smile seemed to say, 'Why did you not think of that before?' but she only said aloud, "Oh, I can manage."

Hal and Sidney were already far up the slope. Suddenly Bert came forward.

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"I'll carry your violin," he said, holding out his hand.

But Freda shook her head. "It is very kind of you," she said simply; "but, you see, I like to have it myself."

"Do you really?" He looked at her in surprise. "Well, then, how would it be to tie it around your neck, and carry it on your shoulders? This way." He took out a long piece of twine from his pocket, and slung the case on Freda's back. "There — isn't that better?"

"Ever so much better! Thank you," and then they set out on their long climb, Ethel clinging to Bert's hand, for she was less shy than usual, and his promise to kill any wild beasts they met and not let them eat her up, had given her confidence in him.

Though it was a cool day for July, they found climbing warm work, and were glad to stop every now and then. When they stopped, they always turned to look at the

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view, which grew more and more beautiful as they gained higher and higher ground. It was very refreshing to come now and then on a little brook, and drink the cool water from Bert's travelling-cup.

Indeed, Bert proved to be excellent company on an expedition; and he had seemingly left his teasing mood at home to-day. When Ethel grew tired, he even carried her on his shoulder, and he made so many funny speeches that he set every one laughing.

And when at last they came out on the bare hill-top, how lovely the world looked!

"Oh, isn't the village little!" cried Ethel.

"Yes," said Sidney; "and see our house down there,—the red spot in the trees next the white spot,—see?"

It was hard to believe that Westholme had dwindled to that size; but even the church was only a splash of white among the green.

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Down they sat to rest and breathe, and watch the great clouds float by, and the crests of the other hills change from blue to violet, as light or shadow held sway over them.

Presently Hal announced that "he didn't know about other people, but he could eat a bit of rock, he was so hungry."

"And *I* could eat all the bushes as well as the rocks, *I'm* so hungry!" declared Sidney.

"You don't know what we've got in our basket!" Ethel whispered to her new friend, Bert. "But I'll give you some, because I like you so."

"Tell me what they are," he whispered back.

"Strawberry turnovers."

"Magnificent!" said Bert. "You're the sort of girl I want at my picnics."

"Well, here's a splendid table, if there aren't any chairs in our dining room,"

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said Elsa, pointing to a great flat rock. "You can lay the cloth there, Banks, and get out the knives and forks and tumblers. I'll unpack the food myself, presently."

It was really a very pretty lunch party. The bright silver and glass which Elsa and Bert had brought sparkled in the sun, and in the centre Winifred set a tumbler of late wild roses, crimson and pink. About it were grouped the various good things in dishes and plates — chicken and ham and lettuce sandwiches, and bread and butter and cake — *and* the famous strawberry turnovers. Unfortunately, though no one had invited them, all the flies and ants in the neighborhood chose to come to the picnic, and it became necessary to cover up everything that was not being eaten at the moment. However, it was part of the fun to chase the ants out of the way, and flap off the flies — or so

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Sidney declared; and he made such vigorous use of a long green branch that he knocked off Ethel's hat.

Every one was thirsty, and the bottles of milk and ginger ale were not long in being emptied. Then, as the last strawberry turnover vanished, the picnickers began to grow merry, and Bert sang several college and rag-time songs, which nearly choked the groom as he sat eating his own luncheon a little way off; and Hal was prevailed upon to recite his favorite poem, "The One-Hoss Shay," which he had given with immense success at the close of last school term; and Sidney, not to be outdone, would stand up and repeat — "My country, 'tis of thee" — which would have gone very well if he could have remembered anything but the first three lines. As it was, he continued saying "Of thee I sing," until Hal said: —

"Well, why don't you?" at which

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everybody laughed but poor Sidney himself, who sat down with a very red face.

"Never mind, old chap," observed Bert, kindly; "that's the way I'm apt to feel at a college exam. I *know* the old thing all right, but it sticks in my throat. Want me to say 'Fuzzy Wuzzy'?"

"Oh, yes!" cried the boys. So Bert declaimed Kipling's poem with all the fire imaginable, to the complete enjoyment of the audience.

Sidney, indeed, was so carried away that for the rest of the afternoon he was every now and again heard shouting at the top of his voice:—

> "'Ere's *to* you, Fuzzy Wuzzy,
> With your 'ayrick 'ead of 'air!"

"And how about the violin?" Elsa said presently, looking at Winifred.

"Oh, not now!" she answered softly. "Let us wait till later; till nearly supper-

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time. I'm used to playing then, and I'm not a bit in the mood now."

After a while the party broke up, going off in twos and threes to explore the woods on the mountainside. They agreed on a particular call which was to be given from time to time, for in woods so wild and unknown to them, it was quite possible to get lost. Hal and Elsa went one way, Bert and Freda and Ethel another; Sidney and the groom on a quest for a reported lake.

Freda was naturally shy, but she was beginning to feel at home with Elsa's big brother; and by and by she was telling him what she never yet had told anybody — of her dreams for the future, and her desire to be a great musician some day. Bert did not think little girls of this age very interesting, as a rule, but there was something very sweet in Winifred's earnestness and unconsciousness, and he liked to have her

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tell him about her hopes and plans. Ethel, meanwhile, having pulled at Bert's hand and asked him to look at this or that, and finding him not as responsive as she wished him to be, presently slipped off by herself.

"I'll go and find Sid," she thought; "maybe he's got to the lake, and then he'll let me fish with a string."

Now, as her father and mother had told her a hundred times, Winifred's chief fault was forgetfulness. When she took up a book, one might speak to her three or four times and get no answer; while if she were playing her beloved violin, a burglar might come in and take everything in the room without attracting her notice. That, at least, was what Hal said. It was nearly as bad when she talked of music with a sympathetic companion; and as Bert and she wandered along the pine-shaded path, it is sad to be obliged to state that Wini-

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fred had forgotten her little sister altogether. And Bert had forgotten her also.

Suddenly, a piercing cry roused them both.

"That is Ethel!" said Winifred, brought fully back to the present. "O dear! where can she have gone? I thought she was right behind us."

"I thought so too," Bert answered; "she must have got tired of us and run away." Then in a loud voice he called, "Ethel! Ethel! Where are you?"

The scream came again, and as Bert hurried in the direction from which it seemed to proceed, a small figure came rushing and stumbling toward him, and threw itself panting into his arms.

"Why, hullo!" he said, raising her up and holding her tenderly, "what's the matter? Did you get hurt?"

"It was a rattlesnake!" Ethel sobbed; "a hor-rid, big, *rattley* one; an' it sat on a

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stone an'—an' looked at me; an' I ran away!"

"Oh, a rattlesnake!" gasped Winifred, with a white face. She looked ready to cry. Bert, on the other hand, burst out laughing.

"Rattlesnake nothing!" he said gayly; "just a common, harmless black snake, I bet. Wasn't he black, Kiddie?"

"I guess so," Ethel murmured. Her sobs were quieting down, now that Bert had her in his strong arms, and that "sister" was there too. She was still trembling with her fright, however.

"Well, well!" the young man said, "to think of a black snake making anybody scream like that! Do you know what I shall do if you are going to scream that way? I'm going to eat you up myself!"

Ethel laughed, and twined her arms still more closely around his neck. "You won't!" she said.

"Won't I though? You just wait and

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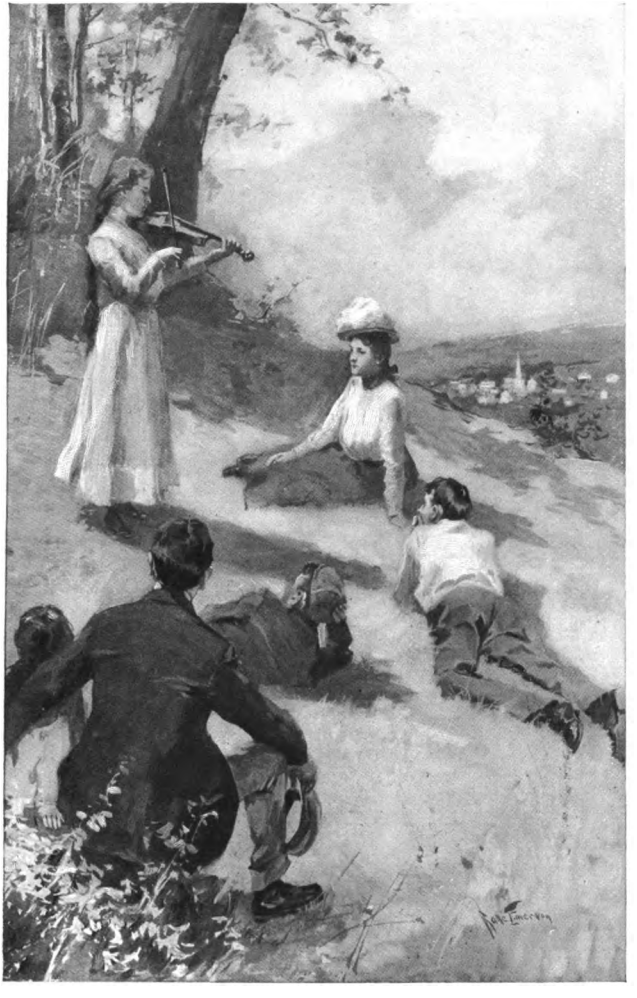

"The touch of the dear, familiar violin brought quiet to her nerves"

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see! And now I'm going to get this party together, for fear of any more adventures. Coo-ee! Coo-ee!" He gave the call with a will. Presently it was answered by Hal who, with Elsa, joined them before long, each group having kept up the calling as a guide to its position. More "coo-ees" at last brought back Sidney and Banks, and as it was now nearly half-past four, Elsa decided to have a fire made, and to boil the kettle they had brought for afternoon tea.

"And now, Freda, we must hear that violin," she said, when the tea was drank, and Banks had taken all the things away to pack for the return trip.

Winifred had not fully got over her fright about Ethel, and it was with a really brave effort that she prepared to play. Presently, however, the touch of the dear, familiar violin brought quiet to her nerves, and she was lost in the music of the strings. It was a pretty picture,— the cluster of young

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people on the hill-top, Ethel sitting by Bert; Hal and Sidney stretched on the grass; Elsa, in her pale pink muslin, watching and listening with a genuine surprise and delight in her face; and Winifred, standing erect in her white dress, holding the old brown violin against her cheek, the afternoon sunshine behind her.

"Well, aren't you glad I made her play?" Elsa asked Bert, as they drove home together, after leaving the Wests at their own house.

"Glad to have heard her, anyway. That little girl is a bit of a wonder. She ought to be allowed to make something of herself, and not be kept in a tiny village all her days."

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CHAPTER IV.

"Good-by, Westholme!"

"LUCINDA! Lucinda! Lucinda!" Sidney and Ethel came tearing down the passage and into the kitchen, calling at the top of their voices.

Lucinda was making pies. Her face was red, and she was not in a mood for conversation. Beside her, on a footstool, stood Mollie, with a little cup of flour and a teaspoon, gravely stirring.

"There now, run along," said Lucinda, briskly, to the other two; "I ain't got the time to be foolin' this mornin'. I'm busy."

"I'se busy, too," observed Baby. "I'se makin' a pie for Fweda!"

"Oh, but you don't know what it is,

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Lucinda," cried Sidney; "it's awfully exciting news. Freda's going to Boston!"

"Freda's goin' to Boston!" Ethel repeated in a doleful voice. Then, quite suddenly, she opened her mouth wide and cried with all her might.

Mollie, after regarding her sister with round eyes for a moment, made up her mind that something terrible was the matter, though she did not know what, and accordingly opened her mouth and wailed in sympathy. Sidney gave a gulp, and turned his back.

"And it's a m-m-mean s-sh-shame!" he said chokily.

"Well, there," Lucinda said afterward to her friend, the egg man, "I was so took aback, I jest sat down ker-flummox!" In fact, she did leave the dough she was rolling out and sink into a chair.

"Land o' pity!" she exclaimed. "When's she goin'?"

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"Not till October," said Sidney, still keeping his face hidden; "but when she goes, she — she isn't coming back till — till n-next s-s-summer!"

Whereupon he also burst out crying, and the kitchen resounded with sobs.

"Do tell, I want to know!" said Lucinda, in an awe-struck tone. "Is she goin' with them Beaconsides?"

"Y-yes, but it's all Mr. Lane's fault, and you see if I don't fix *him!* I heard father tell mother that Mr. Lane wanted Freda to go. I liked him, and I meant to be a organ man myself when I grew up, but now I wouldn't be for *anything!*"

Lucinda sat still for several minutes, asking questions and putting a floury hand up to her face now and then; after which she suddenly rose, and rushed at her pies with redoubled energy, and the children trooped out again to find Winifred.

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Their news was quite true. Winifred was really going to Boston, to spend the winter with her friends, and to study the violin under a leading violinist. Mr. and Mrs. Beaconside had called at Westholme to propose the plan to her parents two or three days before, and after much thought, they had decided to accept such a good opportunity to give her advantages they had had no expectation of procuring. When they told Winifred, and asked her own wishes, she had begged to have time to think, also; and like her parents, she had felt that she ought to say "Yes." So it was settled.

"She will be just like one of the family," Mrs. Beaconside had said; "and I hope she will be very happy with us. Elsa will enjoy having a girl in the house, and Freda will make plenty of friends at school, so she won't be lonely."

The Beaconside family were to leave East Village for Bar Harbor very soon,

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and to spend the rest of the season at different places, Bert and Elsa going to visit friends, first at the seashore, then again in the mountains. They had come to East Village when they did because Mrs. Beaconside had been suffering from an attack of bronchitis, and her Boston doctor recommended the air of that place as better for her than the sea air, for a time. He also knew Dr. West, and said she could not be near a doctor more able to help her if her throat were troublesome again. But Mrs. Beaconside had gained quickly in the New Hampshire hills, and had needed no doctors. Indeed, so much pleased were the rich Bostonians, that they talked of buying a piece of land near Gray's Mountain, and building there.

When they left, Mrs. Beaconside said kindly to Winifred: —

"Then we shall expect you the second week in October, my dear. Elsa will write

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you when we are settled down, and we will fix the day then."

There was a great deal to be done, it seemed, to get Winifred ready.

Miss Jemima Smithers, the East Village dressmaker, was engaged to come for a whole week's sewing, and Mrs. West sent on to New York for samples of dress goods to choose winter dresses from. The samples were so very beautiful, and cost so much, that modest Freda thought one frock was all she could allow herself, but Mrs. West said that two new ones were quite necessary, and pretty ones at that. So at last they decided on a soft gray camel's-hair for best, and a dark blue serge for school use; and there was some crimson velvet for a vest and cuffs to go with the gray, and a whole piece—ever so many yards—of narrow gold braid to trim the blue; so that Winifred felt that her new dresses would be as handsome as any in Boston.

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The gold braid, indeed, had an adventure before it could be used, and one that came near doing away with it altogether. When Miss Smithers was ready to put it on the blue dress, lo and behold! it was missing. She turned all her work bags and baskets upside down and inside out, and looked on shelves and in drawers and under bureaus and sofas — all in vain.

Just then there was a great shouting in the garden below, and down the path came Sidney, driving Ethel and Judy Barnes, and the reins he held sparkled like gold in the sunshine. Miss Smithers stared with wide eyes for a moment. Then she ran to find Mrs. West.

"O my, Mrs. West!" she cried, "if Sidney and Ethel haven't took all that gilt braid for Freda's blue dress to play horse with!"

Mrs. West looked out of her window, and saw the state of things for herself.

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And Sidney spent the rest of the morning in his room, and Ethel had no pudding for dinner; for they had been very bad indeed, and knew it.

Winifred was glad to help Miss Smithers sew; glad to do anything that took up her thoughts, for though she wanted to go to Boston, she hated to leave Westholme. Sometimes she felt as if she must give up going — particularly when Baby came and put her little arms about her neck.

Even Hal's heavy boots on the stairs, and Sidney's tricks and saucy speeches were going to be regretted, she knew. As to leaving mother to mend all the stockings alone — it brought a lump into her throat to think of it. Once she said "Mother, mayn't I write Elsa that I can't come? I don't believe I can ever go in the world!"

"My dear little daughter, what reason had we for accepting the invitation?"

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"Why, you and father did not want me to lose such a chance to study in the city."

"And isn't that reason as good now as it was then?"

"Y-es," faltered Winifred, with tearful eyes; "only, I feel so badly to leave you and everybody!"

"Well, darling, we feel pretty badly too; but we mustn't be foolish. If it was wise to agree before, it is wise to keep to it now; and your friends would think us odd sort of people to change our minds so soon. You must be brave, and we must be brave; and the time will pass more quickly than you think."

But Winifred never knew that Mrs. West lay awake night after night wondering how her little girl would fare so far away; and that often her pillow was wet with tears.

And August and September went by, and the maples were growing scarlet and golden

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when Elsa wrote fixing a day for the journey; and on the 9th of October, in a still, sunny morning Dr. West drove Winifred and her little brown trunk to the station, and saw the train carry them off toward Boston.

It was the first journey Winifred had ever taken alone. She felt very strange, sitting among people she had never seen before, with none of her own to speak to; and as the little East Village station and her father's tall figure were left behind, the tears she had fought to keep back came too fast to be controlled. She kept her face turned away from the other passengers, and looked out of the window, and pressed the long case of her violin closer to her bosom. Here was one friend who had not been left behind. How glad she was to have that dear friend with her! How good it was to know that it could talk to her when she was lonely in the new place she was going to!

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At noon she opened the little basket mother had packed with luncheon, and then it was hard work not to cry again, for Lucinda's crisp cookies, wrapped in the red d'oyley, looked so dear and homelike, and the sandwiches had all been cut and buttered and folded by mother's dear hands, and it was going to be so long before she saw home again.

By and by she noticed a pale-faced girl rather older than herself looking longingly over from the other side of the car at her, and she leaned across and offered a sandwich and a couple of cookies, for there were plenty in her basket. The girl flushed and took them with an awkward gratitude.

"You're real good," she said; "I did feel sort o' faint, for I had my breakfast early. I've been travellin' since six o'clock.

"Are you goin' to Boston?" she asked some while after, when she had eaten her portion of lunch.

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"Yes," said Winifred; "are you?"

The girl nodded. "I'm goin' into the Massachusetts General Hospital to have an operation on my foot."

"O dear, how dreadful!" said Winifred.

The pale-faced girl smiled so that her plain features looked suddenly almost beautiful.

"Oh, no, it isn't dreadful when it's all right," she said softly; "I'm not afraid. The Lord will be there just the same as everywhere else, and you don't feel lonely nor frightened if you know that."

Winifred felt ashamed of her past downheartedness. She was going to friends; she was going to hear music — the greatest happiness possible to her; she was well and strong; and this other was going alone to a hospital to suffer pain and loneliness; and the one had a heavy heart, and the other perfect peace and gladness.

She leaned across, nearer to the smiling face.

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"I'm glad you said that," she whispered; "I must have forgotten, because I was feeling afraid — a little. I never came so far by myself before, and I won't see my home for, oh! months and months. But I will remember now." Then she sat back once more, looking out of her window.

When they reached Boston, she turned to her neighbor and said: —

"Please tell me your name."

"Sarah Brown," said the girl; "won't you tell me yours?"

Winifred told her. "And if I can," she added, "I'll come and see you in the hospital." Just then the train stood still, and a burly young man sprang up the steps and came up to the sick girl. "My brother," she said proudly to Winifred. And Winifred watched them go away together.

Some one touched her on the arm. It was Elsa. Behind her stood the maid Winifred had seen at the Hotel in the summer.

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"Well, my dear!" Elsa cried, kissing her. "Aren't you in a brown study! What on earth were you looking at?"

"That poor girl," Winifred tried to explain. "She has to go to a hospital, and her brother came to meet her."

"Oh, really?" said Elsa, indifferently; "well, where are your checks? Delphine will see to them, and we'll go right out to the carriage. I made mother let me have the coupé this afternoon, to come and get you. Are you well? The children all right? Got your violin hugged in your arms as usual, I see! Come along."

The strange lonely feeling crept back into Winifred's heart. Elsa was somehow more of a young lady than she had seemed last summer. She was very handsomely dressed in a pale gray cloth suit, with a wide hat and plumes; and her hair was done in a more grown-up way. She looked at her friend from the country with a critical eye

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as they walked to the coupé outside the station.

"It will be lots of fun taking you to the shops," she said. "I think I'll play you're a big doll, and dress you up just as I choose."

"Oh, no, you mustn't!" protested Winifred. "I've got two new dresses in my trunk, and that is enough."

"My dear child, two isn't anything in Boston. I've been doing nothing but go to the dressmaker's — and the dentist's (hateful creature!) — since I got home, and I simply haven't a rag to wear!"

Winifred smiled. "I can believe *that*," she answered.

Elsa stared a second — then broke into a laugh. "Oh, I see what you mean! Well, now, Freda, my dear, you won't mind if I seem pretty busy — busier than I was at East Village, will you? I'm just rushed to death, what with school and everything else. It's too bad I've got to leave you the first

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night, but the Comyns have a theatre party to see Sothern, and they've asked me. You'll manage all right, won't you?"

"Why, of course," answered Freda. But the lonely feeling crept still more over her. If *she* had been expecting *Elsa*, she would not have left her the first evening. Still, she must not be selfish. Perhaps it was a thing Elsa could not get out of. She tried not to mind. The carriage meanwhile was rolling smoothly along through streets full of electric cars, and teams, and automobiles, and bicycles, and people, and Winifred wondered why an accident did not happen every minute. Now it reached a street less crowded than the rest, with no cars, and passing by a great green space with trees in it, travelled down a broad avenue with grass and more trees in the centre, and large, handsome residences on each side, and finally stopped.

"Here we are!" said Elsa. "I have

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my own pass-key, and I'll let you in." When they were in, Winifred's eyes grew wide, for this was a sort of house she was not used to. The vestibule opening into a hall like a parlor, carpeted with velvety rugs, hung with splendid pictures and mirrors, and showing through three open doorways glimpses of wide and gorgeous rooms beyond — all was astonishing. And now Elsa was leading the way upstairs — and up such stairs — all carved and polished and covered with some material into which the foot seemed to sink, so soft it was. And still they went up. Winifred began to wonder where the stairs ended.

"That's my room." Elsa threw her hand toward a place full of pink draperies and bright, gleaming things. "We'll go in there later; and that is mother's — she's lying down, but you'll see her at dinner. I hope you don't mind stairs, my dear, because we had to put you right up in the roof."

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In the roof it appeared to be, when at length they reached Freda's room. Elsa sank down on the bed, laughing and panting.

"It's — not a bad sort of room — when you get here —" she gasped. "We meant to give you one lower down, but mother found she was going to need it for another guest room. And then up here, you see, you can practise all you want, and not disturb a soul."

Winifred saw. It was a somewhat bare little apartment, with neither pink draperies nor silver things. But it was neat and comfortable, and there was a lovely photograph of St. Cecilia over the mantelshelf.

Elsa saw her looking at it. "Yes, isn't that pretty?" she said; "and do you know, Bert got that and put it up himself. He thought it would please you."

Elsa talked on awhile, and then said she was afraid she must go and dress; wouldn't Freda like to come and help her?

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When Elsa was off, there was not a great deal of time for Winifred to unpack her trunk and dress herself for seven o'clock dinner. But she got into the pale blue summer frock her mother had thought nice for evening wear, and crept down all the stairs to the hall, wondering where the dining room might be. Here Mr. Beaconside found her timidly waiting, and patted her on the back kindly, and bade her feel at home, in his loud, jovial voice. And Mrs. Beaconside presently came down, very superb in silk and laces, and was kindly, too; and under their protection Winifred was able to eat her dinner without too much fear of the big men in black coats and white shirt fronts who waited on table.

After dinner Mrs. Beaconside gave her a story-book, and said she must tell Delphine if she wanted anything she did not find in her bedroom, and that she had better go to bed early after her journey. And

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then her host and hostess went out to see a play somewhere, and left the little girl alone in the great parlor with its gorgeous furniture.

She bore the loneliness and strangeness for a half-hour; then she put down the story-book, stole up all the stairs again, and shut herself into her own little room with her violin.

It is to be feared she shed some tears over its faithful form.

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CHAPTER V.

A New Teacher.

ON the Monday after her arrival in Boston, Winifred was to begin her lessons with her new violin teacher — Herr Rohricht. Mr. Lane had made all the arrangements by writing, and had tried to prepare both parties for the first meeting. To Rohricht he had written many nice things about the little pupil-to-be, and had ventured to hint that she needed a gentle hand and all the encouragement that could be given; that harshness would make her do her poorest, and kindness her best. To Winifred, he had said, "I must warn you that Rohricht is a queer-mannered fellow till you get used to him. Don't mind if he

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roars and shouts at you, and tells you you have no more notion of a violin than you have of the Sanskrit language. He is a good soul, and will do anything in the world for a bright pupil who is not afraid of him. Just take all he says quietly and go ahead, and you will be his star performer in a month."

Winifred was thinking all this over, as she and Delphine rode on the car which carried them to the unfashionable quarter of Boston, where the Rohricht family lived. After they left the car there was a short walk through pleasant-looking streets lined with trees, and before a brown house in a block of exactly similar brown houses, the maid came to a standstill.

"Yes," she said, consulting a card in her hand, "it say forty-eight, and dis *is* forty-eight. *Allons*, we ring de bell and find out."

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It was the right house. A small servant-girl asked them to walk in, but Delphine turned to go.

"I return at twelve," she announced, and departed.

Winifred's heart began to thump in her breast; she was alone, and she was to see the terrible Rohricht in another moment!

Meanwhile the small servant was taking her upstairs, and into a room bare of all furniture but a grand piano, a couple of chairs, a 'cello, and some music-stands. There was no one in the room. Winifred glanced around, and her eyes fell on a huge pile of music confusedly heaped on the piano. She went softly across the floor to it, and began turning over the leaves. Ah! what joy it must be to be able to play this and this — the great music of the great masters! Should she ever play those wonderful pieces — should she ever dare try?

The touch of a hand on her shoulder

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made her start violently. A man had come in on noiseless feet — or her absorption had prevented her hearing him — and now stood looking down at her.

"How do you find that music — eh?" he asked abruptly. He was a large man, rather stooping in the shoulders, with a lionlike mass of reddish brown hair waving back from a square and high forehead; and he gazed at Winifred with deep-set eyes through round spectacles.

She felt the hot color rush over her face at the surprise of his sudden appearance and the imperious note in his voice, but something — she could not possibly have told what — gave her, even at that first awkward moment of meeting, a feeling of confidence in Rohricht. So she returned his look bravely, though her eyes were soft and shy.

"That is the music I want to be able to play — some day," she said.

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"And how soon do you suppose you can play it?"

"That is what you know better than I."

A swift and sunny smile illuminated the broad and homely face. With one big hand the musician drew her away from the piano so that she faced him; held her by the shoulder a moment, and looked earnestly in her eyes. "The soul is there," he murmured to himself. Suddenly he caught her hand and looked at and felt of it, — "and the fingers are there." He dropped her hand, still considering her as one might a new and interesting piece of mechanism. Then he called out sharply, "Let me see how you stand — how you hold the violin."

Winifred opened the shabby black case which she had laid on the only unencumbered chair in the room, and taking out her violin, was about to place it in position, when the teacher sprang forward and

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snatched it from her. "A Cremona!" he cried,—"and an Amati!" He held it close to his near-sighted eyes,—held it off and looked at it with his head on one side; stroked it caressingly all over; fingered the scroll-head with fingers that seemed to tremble. All the time he was murmuring to himself in German what sounded like terms of endearment. Presently he looked at Winifred with eyes that sparkled behind his round glasses.

"Where did you get this violin? Your father bought it somewhere at auction—yes?"

Winifred told him how it had come into Dr. West's hands.

Rohricht listened, nodding his head now and then.

"Yes, yes," he said musingly, when he had heard the story; "his last treasure—his last friend—and he could not bear to part till death came; no, not till then!

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This is a great privilege for you, my child, — to hold that which a master made long ago, and that which has been to every man into whose hands it has since fallen, dearer than gold. Do not suffer yourself at any time to grow too familiar with this wonder. Touch it always with a little fear, a little dread. If ever you begin to think — 'I am clever — I can play well — I have learned enough,' take out your Amati and consider it; consider the grace, the beauty; the deep color like red and amber fruit seen through dark wine; the exquisite curve of this head, the rise and fall of the surfaces of the body; see these sound holes, so justly cut; pass the bow across the strings and hush your own breathing that the breath of the violin may sound the clearer. Say then to yourself: 'This voice which speaks to me is the voice of the mighty master; the voice of the mighty past'; and remember that you are a child,

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and that as yet you have but begun to learn."

He held the violin toward her as he finished, and Winifred took it silently. His manner had been so grave and earnest as he had said the words of warning, that she felt solemnized and hushed. She adjusted the violin, and waited for him to speak again. He did speak with an amazing suddenness: "That is not the way — hold it so," seizing her head in his two hands, and turning it to the angle he desired, then altering a little the position of the instrument, and next putting her fingers differently on the strings. "Now — play!"

Winifred went home at the end of her lesson with a feeling such as one might have after struggling in surf while the sky is blue and the sun shining. She was at once excited, happy, bewildered, and discouraged.

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Rohricht had scolded her till the tears came; had patted her on the shoulder and cried "Brava!" had told her she was stupid beyond believing; a good child, with the making of a musician in her; and various other things, equally contradictory. He had given her to understand at parting that he was pleased with her, but that she knew nothing, and that five hours' practise a day was to be her new rule.

"I forbid that you waste your time with these rich people to whom you come," he said. "I insist that you work — that you toil; that you make yourself one slave." (He spoke broken English when very much wrought up.) "I will not that you sit up late at night, eat the candy and make fool with the rest; I will haf you early go to bed and sleep like the top. If you do otherwise, I will not teach you!"

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"Phew!" said Elsa, when she heard these injunctions later. "The cross old thing! What does he suppose you are made of? Not eat any candy, indeed! Why, I've just brought home a two-pound box. Here — have some."

But Winifred sadly shook her head. She was very fond of candy, but if she could be a better musician without it — the candy must go. And Elsa laughed and teased and pouted in vain. And in vain did she tell her friend that it was "perfectly absurd to practise five hours a day."

Five hours a day Rohricht had said, and five hours a day it should be.

Still, Winifred was only a little girl, and it cannot be denied that at times the rigors of the new life were hard to bear. It was hard to stay in her cold little top room, going over and over tiresome exercises, when down below, in Elsa's pink and sil-

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ver bower, there was a wood fire blazing, and soft easy-chairs to lounge in; new story-books to read; boxes of chocolate to munch, — for Elsa was generous in a heedless cost-herself-nothing sort of way, — and perhaps a group of schoolgirls sitting on the bearskin hearth-rug and telling confidences.

When the loneliness and tediousness grew very bad indeed, Winifred would remind herself of the dear people at Westholme, and of the money father was taking out of his savings to spend on this winter's study; and that would nerve her to fresh enthusiasm. And sometimes she thought of the girl on the train with the operation before her, and of what she had said. And then she felt that "it was all right," and that God knew all about her and her little trials, and that He would bless the long hours of uninteresting labor. So she was happy again.

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Her faithfulness to the dull exercises was rewarded by her teacher giving her something prettier to play at the third lesson; and as she made rapid progress when she had once grown accustomed to Rohricht's rough manner and had ceased to fear his faultfinding, the music she played was always more interesting as time went on. The five hours, he gave her to understand, were to be divided up into periods of an hour and a half; part in the morning, and part in the afternoon. This arrangement, together with the time Winifred had to give to her ordinary studies, in which she was taking special courses at a Girl's School, left her very little of the day for recreation. Exercise she had in walking to and from her lessons; for now that she knew the way, it was no longer necessary for Delphine to take her on the cars to Herr Rohricht's or to school, and it suited the country girl far better to walk.

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To be sure, walking in Boston and in the country were two different things. Here one had always to be looking out for cars and teams and automobiles, and the pavements were so crowded that one was pushed about and had to push in turn to get anywhere, on the busiest streets.

Elsa had taken her shopping once or twice, and astonished her by the ease and assurance of her air in asking for what she wanted and saying what she did not want, no less than by the large sums of money she was allowed to spend. Mrs. West had given Winifred a twenty-five dollar bill for spending-money, but it was to last her till New Years', and out of it she was to buy a winter jacket. Mrs. West had said that ten dollars was all she could spend on it, and that she was not to spend any on useless things, but to keep it by her as long as possible. Elsa exclaimed when she heard this. "Oh, but

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you can't get a nice jacket for ten dollars!" she said. "Why, my *school* one cost twenty-five, and my *best*, fifty!"

"But I don't expect to have a velvet one like that," said Winifred.

"My school coat is only brown cloth. I think it's very plain, myself, but mother said that with two suits and a golf cape it would do."

Little Freda sighed. It would be nice to have two new suits, and a cloth coat, and a velvet coat, and a golf cape. Just then she remembered that the girl who was on the train had worn a shabby jacket with a patch under one arm, and somehow she felt it was the only jacket she had.

"Elsa," Winifred said abruptly, "did you ever go into a hospital?"

"How do you mean — go to visit one? No, I hate disagreeable places, and they must be awfully disagreeable. Mother is

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on the Board of Directors of one, but she never took me to see it. Why?"

"I wanted to know about that hospital Sarah Brown was going to."

"Who in the world is Sarah Brown?" Elsa's eyes were round.

Winifred explained.

"Oh," said Elsa. She was trying the effect of a white ostrich plume in her best hat, and did not seem much interested.

"Couldn't I go to see her?" Winifred asked wistfully.

"Well, I suppose you could; but I can't imagine wanting to. She's all right there: she doesn't need you. Still, if you really want to—"

"Yes, I do," said Winifred. Elsa's indifferent manner made her feel more determined to do what had been only half purposed before.

It so happened that one of the maids had a sick sister at the Massachusetts General

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Hospital, and hearing that Winifred wished to go there, and did not know the way, she offered to take her on the next visiting day. So it was settled.

Bertha's sister and Sarah Brown, it further happened, were in the same ward; and while Bertha went to her sister's bedside, a bright-faced young nurse took Winifred to Sarah's, at the other end of the long room.

Sarah smiled radiantly when she saw who was coming.

"I knew I was goin' to see you to-day!" she announced.

"Why, how could you?" Winifred asked, puzzled.

Sarah laughed happily. "I felt it first thing when I waked up this mornin'. I slept good last night, an' when the ward maids come around with their brooms, they waked me up; an' then I looked out the door an' see what a lovely mornin' it was, — look, dear, I can see right out into

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the garden where them tall red flowers is growin', — an' I felt somethin' nice was goin' to happen!" She lay and beamed on Winifred as if the paleness of her face and the great black circles under her eyes did not tell of sharp pain and weariness.

"How is your foot?" the girl asked gently. Somehow she hated to speak of it, but it must be done. Sarah still smiled contentedly.

"No better, my dear," she said; "they say I've got to go lame always."

Winifred's eyes grew wide and troubled. She had the excessive sensitiveness of the artistic temperament, and to see anything painful tried her terribly, while even to hear of it was distressing. Besides, she liked Sarah. To think of her having come all the way from her distant home to undergo what she had, for nothing! Her lips quivered.

The girl put out a thin hand and laid it on hers.

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"Now don't you!" she said soothingly. "Don't you feel bad about me; I'm goin' to do fine! Why, the dear Lord knows all about it; He won't make no mistakes! When I've felt the pain pretty bad, I've just said to myself, 'Sarah, this isn't anything to what He suffered on the Cross for you; can't you bear it for Him?' It warn't near so hard after that. Oh, no, dear! I ain't goin' to worry a mite."

"Yes, but to be lame always!" murmured Winifred, tremulously.

"Well, it does sound bad, don't it? But that foot ain't been any use for such a long while, I hardly expected to get any good of the operation."

"Didn't you? Then what made you have it done?"

"Mother wanted me to, and granny, an' all the folks at home, but my brother down here, the most of all, so I thought I would. Oh, but they'll see how spry I'm goin' to

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be! Ain't you ever seen how good a dog will run on only three legs? I guess he feels the same on three as we do on one, but he gets there! My, yes! Oh, the Lord is goin' to let me get round real active, I know!"

Winifred gave Sarah some grapes which she had brought, and promised to write to her if she could not come again, and then she went home, after a little more talk. She did not tell Elsa what Sarah Brown had said, for she thought she would not understand; only when Elsa asked if she had liked her visit, she said "Yes."

Winifred had to practise for two hours that evening, having given up the afternoon; and this, although Elsa begged her to stay downstairs and play games with a girl friend who was dining with them. The girl looked after Winifred as she went upstairs to her room, and said something with a laugh.

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Winifred could not help hearing Elsa's answer: —

"Yes, isn't it queer of her? But she has to work hard, really. She is poor, you know, and going to be a professional."

The hot blood came into the girl's cheeks. Did she need to be pitied?

She took her Cremona tenderly out, and was presently lost in the charm of its voice. What did it matter what people thought? What if she were poor? Ah! they did not love music — those other people. She was playing a Paganini étude, and did not notice a tap at her door till it came for the third time. Then she stopped, with the bow lifted, and called: —

"Who is it?"

"Your fairy godfather," answered Bert's voice, and she heard him run downstairs before she could open the door. On the sill lay a box done up in white paper. Winifred carried it in and opened it eagerly,

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giving a little cry of joy as the lid revealed a quantity of fresh flowers.

It was a happy idea of Bert's, for the girl was homesick for the old garden at Westholme, and here were carnations and roses and scented geranium leaves, all of which grew there in their season. Bert was not much at home, Harvard College requiring most of his time, but he spent all the Sundays with his family, and had proposed once or twice to take Winifred to a Saturday matinée — a plan which had failed of realization thus far. He was always kind and thoughtful of the quiet new member of the circle, and now and then, as on the present occasion, went out of his way to give her pleasure.

Winifred put the flowers in a vase and stood them under the picture of Saint Cecilia, toward which they seemed stretching their rosy little faces, and then she once more took up her violin and completed her étude, standing where she could inhale their fragrance.

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CHAPTER VI.

Piano and Violin.

HERR ROHRICHT was a very unpunctual person. His pupils soon found this out, and were not surprised when he kept them waiting ten or fifteen minutes before making his appearance. Neither did they lose by it in the long run, as he always gave them the time lost, sooner or later, with perfect fidelity. Winifred, who understood her teacher better than any of the other young girls who thronged to him, and who was now quite at home in the big, bare music room, passed the interval before his coming in trying over some one of the pieces of music on the grand piano — pieces far ahead of those he gave her. On one of these occasions Rohricht had come upstairs in his

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noiseless fashion and caught her. He stood a moment outside, listening, with a curious smile on his face: one would have supposed he felt pride in his ambitious little pupil; then with a sudden change of expression quite astonishing, he rushed into the room, seized the music from its stand, and slapped it sharply down upon the piano-top again.

"You think to play the '*Gesangscene*'—*you?*" he demanded in a ferocious tone. Winifred smiled up at him out of untroubled eyes.

"By and by," she said. At which he turned his back abruptly, pretending to hunt for something in his pockets, and did not mention the matter again.

It happened one morning in December that as Winifred mounted the stairs toward the music room, she heard the notes of a piano coming from it. She had once or twice met another violin student leaving

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the room as she reached it, but, as yet, no students of the piano. She supposed it possible that Herr Rohricht himself, for once ahead of time, might be playing, and hastened her steps, for he was furious at unpunctuality in other people than himself, and her little silver watch might after all have been slow. But a glance through the open doorway reassured her on this point.

Seated at the instrument, his back toward her, was a boy, — a boy about her own age, so far as she could judge. His thick fair hair just touched the collar of his gray jacket, as, with head thrown back, he played in a masterly manner the first movement of the Moonlight Sonata.

Winifred paused. Then very cautiously entered the room. The boy gave no sign of being aware of her presence. Laying her violin upon a chair, she advanced by slow degrees, treading so as to make no noise, untii she stood just behind him.

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She had seen at first that the music-rack was empty, and that he was playing without notes. Now, where she stood she could watch the long, unboyish hands at their wonderful work, and as she grew more and more fascinated, she bent lower and nearer the performer. It was strange that he did not notice her presence, but doubtless the music absorbed him entirely. Losing the fear of discovery, she lost caution also, and a long breath of excitement was audible to the ear over which she leaned.

The unexpected happened. The music ceased. The boy whirled around on the music stool, put out both hands, and seized her.

"Who are you?" he asked. He spoke in German, and his face — a round, fresh-colored face — was full of eager expectancy, while his blue eyes seemed to look at and yet past Winifred. As she did not answer at once, feeling shy and confused, he aston-

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ished her by putting up one hand, and quickly and lightly passing it over her face and dress, while he still held her firmly with the other.

She pulled herself away indignantly, and sprang around the piano, across which she looked at him with wide and startled eyes.

"I think you are a very rude boy!" she said breathlessly.

The "rude boy" had risen to his feet, and was standing with both hands stretched out, and a look of surprise on his face. As he heard her words, the look of surprise was followed by one of pain, and he hung his head, while a deep flush covered his cheeks and forehead.

"I do ask your pardon, Fräulein," he said, in labored and halting English. "I was not rude of my meaning. It was that I wished to see you; and to *feel* — that is all the way I can see. You do not then know I am blind — no?"

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It was Winifred's turn to hang her head and feel ashamed. Now that she looked at the boy closely, she could perceive that his eyes did not really see what they seemed to be looking at; that they were vague and expressionless, even when his features were full of expression; and as he drooped his blond head, and let his eager hands fall, clinched, at his sides, turning away to hide a quiver of the lips meanwhile, she felt her heart swell with pity and sympathy. In a moment she was beside him, and had taken one of the tightly closed hands in hers.

"No, I did not know," she said sweetly. "It was stupid in me, but I just thought you meant to tease. Will you forgive me?"

He held the hand she had given him in silence a few seconds; then very gently lifted it to his lips and kissed it.

The action was in keeping with his foreign face, his foreign voice — which last he now found again.

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"I think you must be Freda — the girl with the violin-soul in her eyes, that my father talks of — yes?"

"Why, I *am* Freda," said she, much surprised; "and you—are you Herr Rohricht's son?"

"I am Hermann Rohricht, his only son; the others are girls." There was unconscious pride in the words, and now the blond head was held high.

"I did not know Herr Rohricht had any children."

Hermann laughed.

"There are five of us—four girls: Anna, of eighteen; Gretel, of sixteen; Magdalenchen, of ten; Hilda, of five. I am fourteen years."

"So am I!"

There was a little pause, in which Hermann seemed to be regarding her so closely it was almost impossible to believe he did not see her. At the end he sighed.

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"If it did not make you angry—" he stopped short.

"Yes, — what?"

"I should like to put my hand on your head to see if you are more tall than I."

"Well, you can if you want to."

"No!" he announced triumphantly, at the conclusion of the experiment; "I am taller than you. That is as it should be, for I am the man."

Winifred smiled.

"Not yet."

"Not yet, but before long. To be able to play with my father — that is what I wish. One man has said to him — I heard it in the next room — 'Rohricht, why not put that son of yours before the public?' My father, he is not pleased. He says back, very quick, 'I push no child forward to make gain of him. My son, he will as he likes do when he is grown.'"

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"When I am grown, I shall be a professional," said Winifred, softly.

"I thought so." He nodded his head wisely. "You will some day be a great artist, my father says. My father says you have eyes full of music. That must be very wonderful — *sehr schön; nicht wahr?* You speak German — yes?"

"Just two or three words; I wish I *could* speak it, — then we could talk better of music. You play beautifully, Hermann."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I learn — I learn only. But I love it. *Lieber Himmel,* how I love it! You also, Fräulein Freda — ! My father says of you — "

A big hand descended softly upon his mouth and prevented the conclusion of the sentence. "What dost thou here with my pupil, Herz?" asked Rohricht.

"He was playing on the piano when I came," said Winifred, as Hermann put an arm about his father, and nestled his fair

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hair against him, but did not immediately reply.

"Also, we are to be friends — Fräulein Freda and I," added Hermann.

"That is well; but I do not permit thee to repeat to my pupils the bad things I say behind their backs."

"*Ach*, that is droll!" laughed the boy. "*Bad* things! And thou well remember-est — "

Rohricht stopped his mouth as before, though he was laughing also.

"No more, my son, no more at all! Go thou and find thy mother, for the Fräulein must have her lesson now," he said in German: and with a very gentle push he sent Hermann from the room. But he was unusually gentle with Winifred also that morning, and did not scold her once.

"Did you teach your boy to play so beautifully, Herr Rohricht?" she asked, as she put on her coat and gloves to go. The

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violinist's face shone with its sudden and lovely smile.

"What I have taught him is little; the good God has taught him. Hermann is not like most boys. With his darkened sight he beholds such light as none of us see. And for music — the child is made of it; since he was little baby, creeping little baby, always he cry to hear it — cry to hear more. And when he have that fever — when it leave his dear eyes blind — it is the music he want. Always, always — *Ach!*" With a sudden gesture of grief and pain at the memory, Rohricht turned to the window, and Winifred saw his great shoulders heave. The quick, hot tears were in her own eyes. Poor, poor Hermann! Poor father!

"You must no longer delay," her teacher said in his usual voice after a few moments, and turning back to her; "the snow begins to fall."

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And truly it had begun. Winifred held up her face toward the gray December sky as she hastened homeward, and felt with delight the kiss of the feathery flakes. It made her think of Westholme. The snow had begun weeks ago in the mountains, and Hal had written of the fun he and Sid had had making a snow Esquimaux hut in the garden. They had insisted on cooking dinner in it one day, Ethel and Baby assisting, wrapped up till they resembled young bears, and the dinner had proved very raw and uneatable, and the roof had come down from the heat of the fire, burying every one, and making a delicious scene of excitement.

Baby had struggled out with a pink little face and the remark: —

"I guess I don't want to be little Eximo girl any more!" and Lucinda had scolded frightfully because the kitchen was "all chocked up with wet clothes, till you couldn't git around without rubbers!"

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Winifred thought of all the fun they would be having now, and a sigh passed her lips, for it was a long way to Westholme, and here in Boston there would be no boys to romp with in the beautiful whiteness.

And behind this thought lay another, and a sadder one — she was not to go home for Christmas!

The parents had written her that it would be impossible, the double journey being too heavy an expense, and Freda did not question that what they had decided was best. She was old enough to know the value of money, and to realize her father's cares and burdens. But it was not in nature that a Christmas among strangers should seem like one at home, and matters had been further complicated only that morning by Elsa's telling her that her family had been invited to go on to Mrs. Beaconside's mother's in Philadelphia for the holidays. Elsa had

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looked at Winifred rather oddly as she made the announcement, but Winifred was of a dreamy turn, as we know, and it did not dawn upon her till later that Elsa was wondering what was to be done with the young guest while she and the others were away. For this was to be considered. Winifred felt a little pang at the thought of a long and lonely twenty-fifth in the big Boston house, with only the servants to speak to; but she had too much "sweet reasonableness" to expect her friends to stay away from Philadelphia on her account, and so determined, very sensibly, not to worry about the matter till the time came—and no more then than she could help. It seemed, however, that she must think of it again that same day.

"My dear," Mrs. Beaconside said to her, putting a hand kindly on her shoulder, as they left the dining room after luncheon, "what are your plans for Christmas?"

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Winifred's cheeks grew rosy, and her eyes dropped.

"I — I don't think I have any," she faltered.

"You are still decided not to go home?"

Poor Winifred! As if she were the one to decide!

"My mother wrote that — that she and father thought — that they couldn't quite — that —" Winifred was nearly in tears: it was all so bitter, this poverty, without having to go into details. Mrs. Beaconside patted her cheek. "I see just what you mean, my dear; far wiser not to waste the money. Your parents are sensible people." Winifred winced. "But I just wanted to make sure, because I have to arrange for you, you see, if you are to be here. Elsa told you of our own plan? Yes, I thought so. It is too bad to run off and leave you alone; but you shall have some kind of a good time — I'll see to that. I think I can

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make some pleasant arrangement that you will like. And we shall only be gone three or four days at the outside." She beamed on Winifred, and the girl managed to stammer: —

"Oh, I hope you won't trouble about me, Mrs. Beaconside! I shall be perfectly all right alone; I'm not a little girl who can't take care of herself. And I am all right, anyway."

The lady smiled again. "My dear, I think you *are* a little girl, but a very sensible one. Still, I do not think you will have to be left alone. We will see about it." She turned away, and Winifred was glad to escape to her own room. She ran up the long flights, shut the door behind her, and threw herself, face down, upon the bed.

Just for the moment, she would have given up all her cherished plans and prospects for the future, to be at home again; to feel mother-arms around her; to hear

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the home voices, and press her lips on Baby Mollie's roseleaf cheek.

There was a great wet spot on the fine ruffled pillow when at last she turned over and faced the world again. But she felt better for her tears. They had brought relief, and the weak mood had passed. She knew now, as she looked up at the St. Cecilia on the wall, that she would not give up her future were she twice as lonely and homesick, and that there would be no real happiness in going home unless she were worthy of the dear ones there — the father and mother who were always brave and strong in spirit, whatever clouds darkened their sky.

"Look for the silver lining," mother had always told the children when things went wrong. "Try to see the bright side, and if there isn't anything but a dark one, don't think about it!"

Even Ethel had been known to say to

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Sidney before she could speak plain, when she saw him in grief about something, "Don't oo hink about it, ickle buzzer — don't oo hink about it!"

And then Winifred's thoughts went to the lame girl — Sarah Brown.

Sarah had left the hospital and gone home to her New Hampshire farm, and Winifred had lately received a quaint letter from her, with courage and cheerfulness breathing in every queerly spelled line. She had said she was "dewin Fine, and the Foot no Loss. Could Hop round reel smart on crutches so her Folks was sprised." That "the wether was sumthin lovly for the time o' year, the Sun shinin jest as Hot, an' birds singin noontimes." Also that "she was feelin good to think she'd bin to Boston, wher she had alwers wanted to go the worst way."

Yes, Sarah seemed to have found the "silver lining" to her cloud.

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And then came the picture of Hermann as she had seen him that morning, with his big blue eyes, outwardly so darkened, but so clear of gloom from within; with the calm brow and the happy smile; with the air of confidence and of courage.

Hermann "did not think about it" either; he lived his life and was glad.

There came to Winifred the knowledge that she was one of a great army, and that she was not alone on life's vast battlefield, but that they were all around and behind and before — the souls, old and young, that were fighting for God in the love of Him, in the power God alone gives.

A text came floating into her mind: —

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be." "As thy day —" Not a single bestowal of strength for all her life to come, but strength for the task, the trial of the moment, as the hungry Israelites long ago in the Wilderness received each day enough of

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the heavenly manna for that day's need. "As thy day — so shall thy strength — be." She was tired; the room was cold, and she had drawn the crimson outer cover up and over her. She closed her eyes, and in a few minutes was sleeping sweetly.

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CHAPTER VII.

Music and Mirth.

"MY DEAR FRÄULEIN WEST: It will give us all most sincere pleasure if you can come to our Christmas tree supper at six o'clock on Wednesday next, the twenty-fourth of December. My son Hermann is hoping greatly for your acceptance, and I and my daughters look forward with gladness to meeting you of whom we hear so many things, all pleasant.

"Very sincerely yours,

"ANNA MAGDALENA ROHRICHT."

"Well, who has been writing to you now, Freda?" asked Elsa, as the two girls sat over a late breakfast one morning in the week before Christmas.

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"It is a note from Frau Rohricht, my violin-teacher's wife. I think she is very kind: she wants me to come to their Christmas tree party."

"Well, that will be something to do while I'm gone. I don't suppose it will be exactly thrilling, but it is lots better than nothing. What are you going to wear?"

"Oh, I haven't thought about that, yet. My blue, I think."

Winifred never gave a great deal of thought to clothes, though she liked what was pretty in color or graceful in form.

Elsa made a slight grimace.

"You always wear that! Still, they haven't seen you in it, so perhaps it will do."

"I'm sure it will," answered Winifred, getting up from her chair and folding her napkin. She dreaded beginning one of the long talks on dress which Elsa often introduced. And Elsa might renew an offer,

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made once or twice, of an old party gown, all gauze and flounces, which Winifred had no mind to accept, while she had still less to hurt her friend's feelings. She managed to get away, and once in her own room sat down before doing anything else to answer Frau Rohricht's invitation.

What fun it would be to go to that party! Not "thrilling"! Why, it thrilled her through and through even to think of it. She had seen Hermann twice since their first meeting, and had heard more about his sisters — particularly about the second, Gretel. Winifred felt sure that Gretel was the kind of girl she should love. And now she was going to see her. Then there was Anna, — Anna who was "betrothed," and who would be married in February to Barthold Weiss, the 'cellist who lived next door. And 'Lenchen, whose golden braids fell far below her waist; and little Hilda, who seemed much such a family darling as her own Mollie.

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And they would be unlike the girls she knew, — like girls out of a book, — and the party would not be like an ordinary party, but like the Christmas Eves one read of in German stories. Oh, it was delightful!

The holiday time away from home looked much more endurable for this new development; much less lonely. Not that Winifred was to be alone. Mrs. Beaconside had told her that an old lady, a former teacher of her own, with an adopted niece was coming to pass the week — it might be a week, after all — that the family would be absent. Winifred would have liked as well to have these strangers stay away; but now it would not be necessary for her to be with them all the time. Christmas Eve would be spent with those whom she already regarded as friends.

Her face was so bright as she stood on the steps bidding her hosts good-by the morning of the twenty-third, that Elsa reproached her with not minding their going.

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"You really don't care a bit, do you, you horrid girl?" she called from the carriage window. But Winifred only smiled and waved her handkerchief.

When the carriage was gone, she turned back to finish a little gift she was making for Hermann — a silk watch-guard. Her package of presents for home had gone off by express yesterday, and the wagon had brought the dear home-parcel of gifts for her on its evening trip. That brown paper! She had kissed the writing in her father's firm hand, and pinched the corners wistfully, wondering what was inside; but not for the world would she have opened it before the right day. It stood in her closet with the big box Mrs. Beaconside had given her, and the long package from Elsa, — also to be left unopened till the twenty-fifth. Winifred had felt that her own tiny tokens for Elsa and her mother made a poor show.

About noon the aunt and niece who

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were to spend Christmas, arrived; a severe-looking, elderly lady, and a pale little girl, younger than Freda.

It was evident that Miss Drayton did not expect the latter to play hostess, but considered her a child, and this was a distinct relief. She was able to spend her day as she chose, for the strangers gave most of theirs to unpacking and putting away their belongings.

Bert came flying up the steps and let himself in the front door late that afternoon. He carried a paper-covered something, and seemed in a hurry. Winifred ran down to receive him, and he drew her into the small reception room beside the entrance.

"Who's the old lady with awful eyes sitting in the parlor window?" he asked in a subdued voice.

Winifred smiled. "Miss Drayton. Don't you remember about her? She is to stay here while you are all away."

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"Great Cæsar! I'm no end sorry for you, Mousie. Is she as portentous as she looks?"

"I don't know. She has a grim way, but I don't believe she is really very cross. I haven't got very well acquainted with them yet."

"'Them'—! You don't mean to tell me she's twins? That can't be allowed!"

Winifred laughed outright. "How silly! I meant her niece when I said 'them'—Geraldine."

"Well, all I can say is, it's a mean shame to leave you here with no one knows who, for Christmas. However, —what must be, must. I'm off by the night train, myself—and, meanwhile, here's a trifle for the festival. Look at it now."

The "trifle" was an exquisite pot of growing maiden-hair fern in a silver holder. Winifred was charmed.

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"Well, I thought it rather nice; put it in your room, and give it all the water it wants. It won't need any sunshine with you there. Good-bye, little girl; 'Merry Christmas!' Got to run, for I've fifty things to do, and haven't packed my duds yet!" He was off and away, and Winifred bore her beautiful fern upstairs, and thought, as she set it on her table, that she was fortunate in having so kind a friend as young Mr. Beaconside, and that she was going to have some pleasures this Christmas which she could not have enjoyed at Westholme. They were her compensations.

The next morning dawned gray through falling snow, and the snow fell all day. Winifred felt that she ought to entertain the guests who were housed by the weather, and shyly tried to find out what they preferred to do. Miss Drayton preferred reading to anything else, but Geraldine

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took no interest in books. What she liked was to talk — and Winifred let her do it steadily till luncheon at one, after which she told the little chatterbox she had to practise. Geraldine begged to be allowed to be present, but this Winifred gently and firmly refused. She left her with a pile of picture papers and the big music-box downstairs, and escaped to her top floor with a light heart.

She took out her Cremona and played for two hours, and at five she prepared to dress for her party.

Was her blue gown a trifle shabby? She looked at it with new criticalness. Well, — it was all she had. She combed out her thick brown hair and braided it smoothly; fastened the neck of her waist with the tiny gold clover-leaf which was her one brooch, and then, as by a happy thought, plucked two or three sprays of

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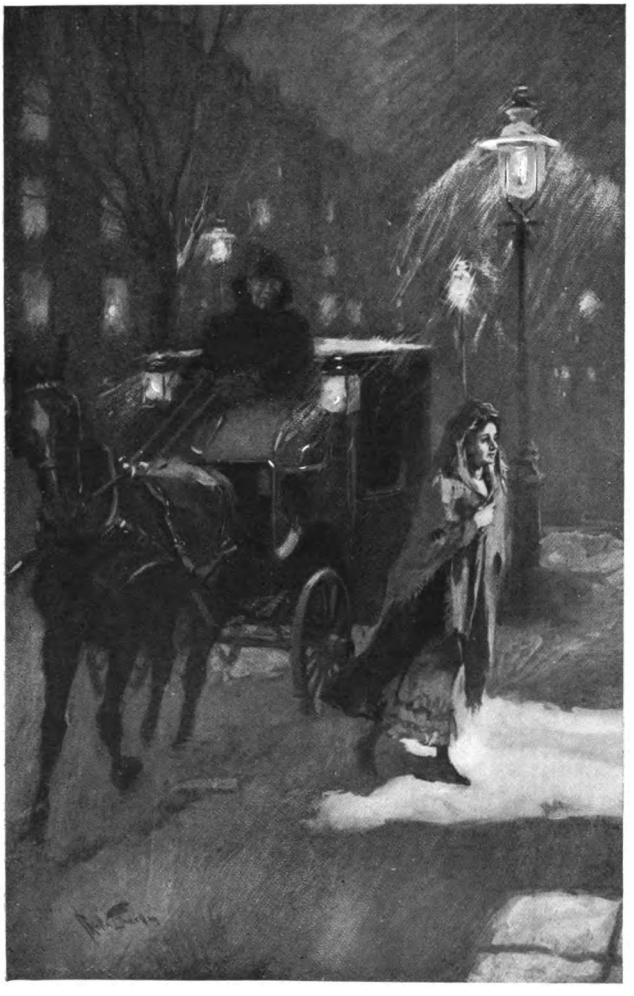

"She got out and ran up the steps"

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Bert's maiden-hair and pinned them in the front of her dress. The effect was very pretty. When all was done, she wrapped herself warmly in a huge, shaggy shawl, and issuing from the front door into the snowy street, beckoned the hackman at the corner to come to her. It was a great extravagance, but she could not well walk, and this was a great occasion: mother would say it was right, she felt sure. And now her heart began to beat fast with excitement. What fun it was to be going to a party on Christmas Eve in the city, all by herself! What fun it would be to meet Hermann's sisters, and to see a real German Christmas tree!

And now the cab had stopped. She got out and ran up the steps; the door flew open: Hermann stood on the threshold, his face radiant.

"It is thou!" he said, using in his gladness the endearing term of his native

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tongue, only employed among intimate friends, — "I knew it must be: the others are here already. Come in."

"Is it the Fräulein?" asked two girlish voices behind him; and Winifred saw golden heads and light dresses, and in another moment felt the clasp of soft arms. The sisters introduced themselves and each other. "This is Gretel — I am Anna — I am 'Lenchen; this is Hilda — the baby — " all with much pretty laughter and gesticulation, interspersed with the most affectionate kisses. Winifred felt as if she had come into a place all warmed and made ready for her — a nest of kindness. She loved the big, fair-skinned girls with their coils of shining hair, and soft, foreign voices, and plump, encircling arms, at once, and was not shy with them; but felt a sudden bashfulness when they carried her into a small room, lit only by the ruby glow of a big open fire, and an-

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nounced to a dozen people, all strangers, and chiefly young men: —

"Here is the Fräulein Freda at last!"

The men stood up; there was a murmur of welcome; various names were spoken; hands given and taken — cordial, sympathetic hands, the girl felt, even while she drooped her head and blushed. Then she found herself sitting between Gretel and Hermann before the fire, with every pair of eyes in the little room fastened upon her. She was overwhelmed.

"We are so glad to have you with us!" Gretel said caressingly. "The snow is so deep, we did not know if perhaps you might fear to come."

"What did I say, Gretel?" demanded a tall, stalwart young fellow with a long mustache; "have I not won my wager?"

"What was the wager?" asked a black-haired youth standing next him, his arm along the mantelshelf, the red glow of the

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fire illuminating from below a pale face with immense black eyes.

"I wagered that the Fräulein would come, snow or no snow — and behold!"

"I could have told you she would come," said Hermann.

"So could I, had I already seen her," added the dark young man; "she is of the mountains. I am right, Fräulein, — yes?"

He spoke directly to Winifred, who looked at him in surprise.

"Yes, I come from the mountains." Her tone asked, "How did you guess?"

"I am a magician," he said gravely. "I always know where people come from, and one can see that you are an Alpine Fay, for whom the storm has no terror!"

"That's a pretty fable, Franz!" cried the stalwart young man, slapping his friend on the shoulder. "I, for my part, am no magician, and yet when I saw Anna I

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knew she was from heaven!" Which turned all eyes, amid general laughter, to beautiful Anna Rohricht, his betrothed.

Anna shook her head at him, and had opened her lips to speak, when the door was thrown open and Herr Rohricht himself walked in with the command, in his loudest voice: "Up and out! To the tree!"

At the same moment he caught sight of Winifred, and came over to her.

"Come, we will go together, little pupil of mine!" he said, putting a fatherly arm across her shoulders. "*Ach!* thou wilt take her thyself, Herz?" as Hermann gently took hold of her other hand. "*Ja wohl*, the young with the young!"

Laughing and jesting, the crowd was now passing up the stairs, and Winifred stood amazed at the entrance to the familiar music room.

Blazing with lights, draped in greenery, and fragrant with flowers, it bore little like-

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ness to its work-a-day self. The grand piano, rolled against the wall, was draped with the combined flags of Germany and America, and in the centre of the floor towered a lusty young fir, laden with gifts, and glittering with tinsel and glass and the flames of a hundred tiny tapers. Everybody exclaimed in admiration. Then there was a rush forward, and Winifred, led by Hermann and his father, found herself presented to a smiling little lady in blue silk, and another sweet-faced older lady with white hair — Frau Rohricht and her mother, Frau Stoller. The young men thronged around, kissing the hands of both ladies, German fashion, and talking in German very fast. Winifred now saw a group of small tables behind the tree, each heaped with parcels, and, standing upright by some means on each table, a good-sized gingerbread man!

The five young Rohrichts flew to un-

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doing the parcels, each at his or her table, Hermann enjoying it all as much as his sisters, and drawing Winifred with him that she might describe his presents to him.

Meanwhile, a great noise of laughter arose, and Winifred saw Rohricht with an armful of gingerbread men and women, distributing them to the guests. Her own turn came in a moment, and she held in her hand a very brown and spicy figure, with currants for eyes.

It appeared to form a regular part of the entertainment, this giving away of the gingerbread dolls, and jokes flew back and forth among the young men.

"See my little *pfefferkuchen Frau!*" cried one, holding up his prize. "She shall keep my bachelor apartment in good order, and, I trust, see that I have buttons on my shirt!" "*Ach, ja,* Rudolf! And money in thy purse!" "And that thou comest home betimes from the *Verein!*"

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Herr Rohricht was now surrounded by his five children, all crying out thanks for the presents he had given them, all kissing and hugging him, and saying: "*Ach, wunderschön! Sehr schön!*" The good man kissed each one tenderly, after which they flew to their mother and grandmother, and embracing them in turn continued to say: "*Wie schön! Wunderschön!*"

Winifred, unused to so much demonstration, looked on a little amazed. She could not fancy to herself Hal throwing his arms around Dr. West, however he might feel in his heart. But she was far more surprised than she had been yet, when a stout woman in a cap and apron who had been standing by a table in the background, now came forward bearing a piece of dress-goods in one hand and holding out the other to Herr Rohricht, exclaiming with a beaming face: "*Wunderschön! wunderschön!*" as the young people had done. Herr Rohricht shook the

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hand heartily, saying something in German which Winifred did not understand, and Anna who happened to be near, whispered, "That is our dear old nurse who came with us from Germany."

The stripping of the tree now began, with the distribution of certain packages too heavy to hang on the branches, and consequently placed underneath, chiefly gifts from Herr Rohricht to his mother-in-law and wife. Everything was shown to everybody, and everybody cried, "Lovely!" "Beautiful!" "Wonderful!" "Splendid!" in the most cordial way.

Winifred was astonished to receive a present, but Hermann had not meant her to be left out, and slipped into her hand from its place on the tree a pretty little silver buckle in the form of a lyre!

"Is it beautiful? I asked Gretel to choose for me," he said wistfully. Winifred assured him that it was, and a smile of grati-

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fication lit up his face when she gave him her watch-guard in return.

"This should go to the Alpine Fay," some one said, and the black-eyed young man, whom the rest called "Franz," or "Bolinski," advanced toward Winifred and suddenly placed on her head a garland of frosted leaves which glittered like crystal. The others clapped their hands and cried: —

"*Wunderschön!*" and Winifred's eyes dropped and her cheeks glowed.

Involuntarily her hand went up to remove the undesired crown, but Hermann caught it and held it fast. "Do not take it off!" he entreated, "I know you must look like one of Grimm's Princesses — so lovely; let it stay." Then as he felt her hand struggle to be free, "*Ach*, Fräulein Freda! you will, — to please me?"

"Oh, yes, of course, if you want me to," she answered.

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"You will not wear it to please *me?*" questioned Bolinski.

"No," said Winifred, briefly. Hermann patted her hand contentedly. Franz shrugged his shoulders and returned to the tree.

The last thing to be taken from it was the little figure of a child-angel which spread its tiny wings at the very top, and this was given to five-year-old Hilda by her father, with the remark: —

"There, thou must be a good child all the year if I give thee this." He lifted the cherub-faced, yellow-locked little girl in his arms and kissed her on the forehead. "Come," he said, "canst thou not say the verse about the Christchild and the Christmas tree?"

Hilda nodded, holding the little angel, and looking at it lovingly.

The company stood still and quiet to listen, and the sweet baby voice began with a pretty hush of reverence in its tones: —

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"Christchild, to whose infant side
Did a star the Wise Men guide;
Christchild in the stable bare,
Curtained by Thy mother's hair;
Christchild, Christchild, —deign to be
Present at our Christmas tree!

"Christchild, at whose infant feet
Wise Men offered incense sweet;
Round about whose cradle cold
Shone the splendor of red gold;
Christchild, Christchild, — deign to be
Present at our Christmas tree!

"Christchild, Thou our sun most bright
Rising on the dark world's night,
Bless us when our gifts we bring
Once again for offering;
Christchild, Christchild, — deign to be
Present at our Christmas tree!"

"*Ach, wunderschön!*" said the company, and Rohricht kissed Hilda again.

"And now, all must come to supper," said Frau Rohricht. So down to the dining room they trooped, where a tempting repast was spread, the most remarkable fea-

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ture being a huge frosted cake nearly three feet high, called a "*Baumkuchen*" or tree cake, and supposed to resemble the stump of a tree.

Everybody ate and laughed and talked a great deal, and everybody's health was drunk, and speeches were made — chiefly with a view to teasing Anna and Barthold, who sat hand in hand, smilingly enduring the chaff showered upon them.

And when supper was over, a general movement upstairs again began; and it appeared that busy hands had cleared the music room for dancing, the tree being put back against the wall, and the little tables which had held the pile of presents being also stacked there. The piano was open, and Hermann, at his father's request, sat down before it and struck the first notes of one of Strauss' waltzes.

In an instant, partners were chosen, and Winifred found her hand seized by Franz Bolinski; she gently drew it away.

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"I do not dance," she said, and taking a chair near the piano, she prepared to watch Hermann's playing. But this did not suit Herr Rohricht's notions at all.

"Not dance! *Ach*, you shall dance with me, myself, at least!" And before Winifred fairly understood what was happening, she was being whirled across the room in his big grasp. But at the end of a few turns, he laughingly let her go, and she sat still after that.

It was past eleven when the hack left her at her own door, and Rohricht, who had insisted on going home with her, wished her "Merry Christmas" as he shook hands. When he reached the lowest step, and as the servant let her in, he turned and said: "It is possible you may see some of us on the morrow."

Winifred wondered as she went to her room what he meant.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Keeping Holiday.

CHRISTMAS morning came up all golden and rosy, and the sun shone without a cloud in a dazzlingly blue sky when Winifred and her guests set forth for church. As she sat looking up at the trailing garlands of green around the tall pillars and over the windows, and heard the white-robed choir singing, "Hark! the herald angels," Winifred's heart longed for the old seat at home; for the village choir, and the good old clergyman who had married her parents and baptized her and the other children; for the sight of Mr. Lane at the new organ the congregation was so proud of; most of all, for her own people sitting

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by her, and for Baby's curly head on her lap when sleepy-time came.

She knew they would be thinking of her, and this made her feel not so far away, after all; and she prayed for all blessings on them, and that she might deserve their love and their trust in her.

And it was with a calm and peaceful and happy heart that she left the House of God.

And when she reached home, it was so perfectly delightful to shut herself into her own room and open her presents before the early dinner gong sounded. Ah! those presents! The book she had wanted so long, — "Old Violins," — from her father; the pretty pink silk waist made by her mother's worn hands in late evening hours, as she well knew; the little silver stickpin from Hal; the box of home-made candy from Sid and Ethel (Herr Rohricht must let her eat *this* candy!); the tin box of crisp cookies sent by the faithful Lucinda; and

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last of all, the wonderful picture in colored chalks from Mollie. No one could ever have guessed the subject of this work of art, but a line of writing on the back told that it was: —

"A portrait of mother sitting in the garden with Baby in her lap."

Winifred laughed over it till she cried; after which she pinned it up on her door to keep it in plain sight always.

And then she opened Mrs. Beaconside's box, and exclaimed delightedly as she drew out a golf cape of dark plaid, lined with warm crimson, the mate of Elsa's own. In Elsa's package, she found a dainty white fan, hand-painted with violets and lilies-of-the-valley, — very beautiful.

Then there were a number of little parcels and letters which had come through the mail, bringing cards and calendars and trifles of one kind or another, to be looked over. Altogether, the gong surprised her

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by sounding before she expected it, and she ran downstairs in a hurry.

Miss Drayton and little Geraldine looked rather lonely sitting in the parlor awaiting her. Winifred was afraid they had not had many presents. And when she asked Geraldine to come up and see hers, later, she found that it was so. The child's eyes grew wider as she examined one thing after another, and at last she said in a sad little voice: —

"It must be nice to have people be so fond of you!"

"Why, people are fond of you, too, aren't they?" Winifred asked cheerfully.

"No, I guess not. They don't give me capes and silk waists and big fans and pots of ferns and things."

Winifred was considering. One of her East Village friends had sent her a little scarlet silk necktie; why not pass it on to Geraldine?

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She did not like the idea of giving away a gift, but was it not the right thing to share our pleasures? She got up and brought the tie from her bureau.

"I would like you to have this, if you like it, Geraldine," she said.

A great red flush rose in the pale cheeks.

"Oh, I guess I do like it! I think you are sweet!" She put both arms around Winifred impulsively. Then she ran to the glass and tried the effect of the tie. It did not look specially well with the purple dress she was wearing, but that evidently did not trouble her, and when she furthermore received a box of marshmallows which some one else had sent, she was full of happiness.

"I do envy you!" Geraldine said, with a marshmallow halfway to her mouth. "You're so pretty, and so clever, and everybody loves you so!"

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"Pretty!" Winifred opened her eyes. "No one ever said so before. And as to being clever — you ought to hear Herr Rohricht talk to me!"

She laughed gayly at the remembrance.

"I don't care; you are, just the same," Geraldine declared, swinging her feet. "Even Aunt Miranda thinks you are nice, and she's awfully hard to please. She told me last night she wished I'd try and talk the way you did. She says I am not particular about my English."

Again Winifred laughed. "I'm sure I didn't know *I* was!"

"Well, you talk nicely, anyway, — I can see that, myself. I suppose you have always been taught to do everything by your mother. I haven't any, and I think that makes a difference; because you take more pains if you're fond of the person who tells you things. Now, I'm not fond of Aunt Miranda a bit."

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Winifred's expressive face showed how this statement struck her, and Geraldine went on petulantly: "You can look shocked if you like, but I'm not. And I don't see why I should be. She isn't fond of me."

"Oh, Geraldine, I think she must be, if she has you live with her, and does everything for you as if you were her own child!"

"She has to have me: it was in papa's will. It isn't because she wants me, I know. She's awfully strict — won't let me do anything I want to, and that the girls at school do, and she's just as cross as she can be most of the time!"

Winifred said nothing.

"I sometimes think I'd like to run away," Geraldine went on musingly; "but I'm scared to. I don't know where to run to. And if she found me again — oh, *dear!* There, you look shockeder than

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ever, and you won't like me any more! I don't care; nobody likes me."

The child hid her head on the table and burst into tears. Winifred put an arm gently round her, and drew the hidden face on to her shoulder.

"Now, Geraldine, listen to me," she said in a soothing voice; "I am very sorry you have no mother, dear, because you are quite right about its making a difference — it does. But I think your aunt does care for you, even if she is cross sometimes, and I think if — well, if you would be a little more loving to her, she would be to you. Just think — she is old and tired, and there isn't much for her to enjoy — I know she is very poor — and you are young, and have all sorts of good times waiting for you in the future. You must be patient. You won't be sorry by and by if you are; and if you are not — if you are unkind to Aunt

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Miranda now — why, you'll be dreadfully sorry! Think of that."

"You don't know how hard it is," murmured Geraldine, "or you wouldn't talk so." But she wiped her eyes after a time and sat up, and Winifred was cheered to notice that she took another marshmallow. A little while afterward she was laughing and talking in the best of spirits.

They had finished the meat tea which Miss Drayton preferred to late dinner, that evening, and Winifred had settled down to teaching her little guest a game, while Miss Drayton read, when there came a sound of feet on the steps without — feet stamping off the snow — together with various voices pitched in cheerful keys. The bell rang.

"Visitors!" said Geraldine, — "or more presents for you, Winifred!"

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The footman came into the parlor with an air of discreet perplexity and began addressing Winifred —

"Some one to see you, miss; they said —"

But nobody ever knew what they had said, for without more delay into the room poured Herr Rohricht and his three oldest children, Barthold Weiss and Franz Bolinski, the men carrying violin and 'cello, Hermann a roll of music, and the pretty Gretel a basket of holly.

"You see we have come!" announced Herr Rohricht in his deep voice.

"And we have brought music with us!" declared Hermann, joyfully.

"Oh, how lovely!" cried Winifred, clasping one hand after another; and then she presented everybody to Miss Drayton, who was looking on with the greatest astonishment, not unmixed with disapproval, and who merely acknowledged the low bows of

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the foreigners with a stiff nod and a very ungenial hand-shake.

"You must take off your things," Winifred said hospitably, and off came overcoats and cloaks, which Weiss piled up in the hall outside, revealing a picturesque variety of costume reaching its height in Bolinski's tawny velveteen suit with an orange-colored silk handkerchief loosely knotted about his turn-down collar of unstarched linen. Anna and Gretel wore dresses just alike, of crimson cashmere, with elbow sleeves, and sprays of red-berried holly in the masses of their golden hair. They beamed on Miss Drayton and kissed Geraldine, who was regarding them with eyes and mouth wide open, and looked round the large and richly furnished room, softly breathing — "*Wunderschön!*"

"And now, we will some music have," announced Rohricht, establishing himself in a gorgeous brocade chair as Master of Cere-

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monies. "Get your violin, Fräulein Freda; we will have a string quartet to-night!"

Winifred's cheeks turned quite pale; then rosy-red.

"Oh, Herr Rohricht," she began breathlessly, "I'm afraid I can't."

"Ta, ta, ta! Do you not think I know more well than yourself what you can do? The violin — the Cremona, I say!" He brought down his big hand on the arm of the chair for emphasis. Winifred fled.

How it happened, she did not know, but presently she was playing a piece she had never practised, with Rohricht and Bolinski and Weiss, the latter booming away on his big instrument and seeming to make a finer volume of sound than any she could ever produce on her dainty little Amati. Now and then she made a slip, and Rohricht shouted at her in tones which made Geraldine tremble, but which Winifred had long ceased to fear. On the whole, however, she did

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remarkably well, and at the end, was overwhelmed with compliments by the young people. A gruff—

"Not so bad," from her teacher, was equal to another person's praise, she knew.

Hermann was next requested to play some of Chopin's ballades on the piano, and now Miss Drayton, who had not fully appreciated the quartet, and perhaps not fully forgiven the unconventionality of the entire affair, began to take a vivid interest. She leaned forward, watching the boy as he played, and presently Geraldine saw her draw her handkerchief from her pocket and stealthily wipe her eyes. It made her think of what Winifred had said earlier in the day. Yes, Aunt Miranda had a pretty hard life. Perhaps that sad, soft music reminded her of the time when she was young and pretty, and had good times at Christmas. A sudden tenderness for the stern old lady flooded her heart, and she told herself that she

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would try to please her more — to vex her less.

Hermann had passed from Chopin to Schumann, but still what he played was soft and plaintive; it seemed to be full of questioning, the lovely refrain that came again and again, — the questioning of a soul perplexed, and yet not rebellious — only wondering, always wondering. Miss Drayton turned abruptly and took up a book, though the lettered page swam before her. Bolinski moved lightly to the piano and whispered in Hermann's ear. The boy nodded, and scarcely seeming to cease playing, swept his hearers into the bright and gladsome measure of a dance.

Bolinski seized his violin, and began an accompaniment; the change was marvellous. The serious faces of his hearers seemed lit up on a sudden; Anna and Barthold caught each other by the hand and smiled into one another's eyes; Gretel, smiling also, beat

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time on the carpet with a small foot in a crimson shoe; and Winifred, glancing at little Geraldine's ecstatic face, smiled to herself.

And now Bolinski, having finished the valse, spoke again to Hermann; but this time Hermann shook his head. "I do not know it," he said.

Bolinski turned to Anna. "Fräulein, will you play my accompaniment to a Hungarian dance?"

Anna rose with her happy, sweet-tempered smile.

"Is it one I know already? Ah, you have it — let me see. Well, no; I do not know it, but I will try."

She took Hermann's place, and began to play, Bolinski waiting a moment only to dash in with a wild scream of his bow across the strings. It was the weirdest music Winifred had ever heard, — music full of sharp sudden changes, capricious ups and downs,

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daring and unexpected turns, ending suddenly on a low note, twice repeated.

"Oh!" breathed the hearers. But Bolinski gave them no time. He tossed the long black hair out of his sparkling eyes, showed his white teeth in one laughing flash, and was off again.

Geraldine was spellbound, and even Miss Drayton gave up her pretence at reading, and sat listening with a faint flush in her cheeks. It was strangely stirring music; the blood in the veins seemed to dance as one heard it; and one could fancy the dark Hungarian gypsies with scarlet kerchiefs on their heads, with such loose black locks and wild black eyes as the young violinist's, dancing to its strains by the moon.

After a half-hour, Anna dropped her hands at her sides and threw herself back in her chair.

"For pity, Herr Bolinski, let us stop!

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I am not used to such playing; it is like riding a lightning-flash!"

Bolinski's bow drew a discordant wail from the violin, and ceased.

Again he tossed back his hair, laughed, and flung himself on a chair.

"What do you think of that, Fräulein Freda?" he asked.

Winifred gazed at him without speaking an instant; then answered, as if waking from a dream, "Oh, it was wonderful—wonderful!"

"You like my music, then?"

"Yours?"

"Surely; I am a Hungarian. I have always believed, a Hungarian gypsy. They tell me I was born in a decent red-brick house in a common-place city. Fudge! I will never believe it. I was born on a bare heath under the great red November moon, and all the pixies and nixies came to my christening. One brought me the gift of

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a vile temper, rude as the north wind; another, the love of the wide sky and no roof over me — *Wanderlust;* one bestowed one gift and one another — bad, malicious gifts, most of them; but one dear sprite gave me the gift of music, and that made amends."

Herr Rohricht struck one big hand into the palm of the other. "Well said, Franz; thou art a musician to the tips of thy fingers. For the rest, we love thee, faults and all."

When, a little later, the party broke up, Geraldine ventured to the side of the Hungarian, as he put up his violin.

"Oh, please," she said, growing red with bashfulness, but standing her ground, "are you a really, truly gypsy?"

"Really I am," he replied, with a mysterious look; "I can read hands; I can tell fortunes — do not I look like it?"

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Geraldine regarded him with unfeigned admiration, as one might some picture or statue. "You look like — oh, like a prince out of a fairy story!" she said softly.

Bolinski's white teeth gleamed again as he looked down at her.

"And you, my dear little girl, look like a very neatly brushed wax doll. Beware of fairy tales, princes, and especially gypsies, and cultivate a love of bread-and-butter and stocking-knitting, — so shall you be both happy and good!"

"I think it was rather queer in him to say that, don't you?" the child inquired of Winifred, as they went up to their rooms after the visitors had left.

"I think he is queer, himself," Winifred said; "and as for that music he played, I like the other kind best."

As she lay trying to go to sleep a half-hour later, the weird dance measure kept

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beating and beating in her memory; it troubled her with a vague discomfort; a distress she could not explain. To banish it, she tried to remember what Hermann had played first; and suddenly there came floating, grand, sweet, calming the clamor of the gypsy strain, the great sonata he had been playing when she saw him — long ago, it seemed, now — that morning before they met. Clearer and stronger swelled the sonata — fainter and fainter grew the dance. And the sonata was like a broad, quiet river, on which one might float, and float, down to the sea, and she felt herself borne upon it — farther and farther — till she knew no more.

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CHAPTER IX.

Standing and Withstanding.

"DAD, I wish you would let me have five dollars; I haven't a cent in the world!"

The Beaconsides had returned from Philadelphia, and Elsa made the above request as they sat around the dinner table one evening.

Her father looked at her quizzically. "Seems to me you said that not very long since, in just the same words, Elsa. Do you know that you are exceeding your allowance all the time?"

"Oh, I daresay I am! I'll try and do better, — I will, truly, if you'll let me have five this time."

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"What do you want to do now, I wonder?" Mr. Beaconside said, putting his hand in his pocket and drawing out a crisp bill, which he tossed across the table. "You must have every conceivable article of clothing a girl of your age needs, and about everything else; haven't you?"

Elsa laughed. "I want matinée tickets. I'm going to take Freda to the theatre; she doesn't get half enough fun."

Winifred opened her lips to speak, but Mrs. Beaconside said quickly, —

"What play do you want to see?"

"'Saucy Sarah Jane.' They say it's fine."

"Oh, no, Elsa, I don't want you to go to that; and I certainly should not allow Freda to go, either. It's a very silly play indeed."

"Well, mother, it's funny, and that's what I like. I want to see that girl — what's her name? — Nonnie Le Clair. Two

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or three of the girls at school have been, and they say she's *terribly* funny!"

"Oh, yes, terribly!" said Bert, who happened to be dining at home; "throwing doughnuts round the stage, and all such things as that. Beastly vulgar. You can't go, and so I tell you!"

"Bert, you haven't any right to tell me what I can do or can't do, and you're a tiresome old fuss!" There were tears of vexation in his sister's eyes. Bert reddened. No young fellow likes to be called fussy.

"Well, I know what I'm talking about, and you don't," he answered hotly. "That is not the sort of play I want my sister going to, and as for Freda—"

"There, there, that's enough," interrupted his father, who could not bear disputation. "Your mother has forbidden the girls' going, and that ends it. We will talk about something else."

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No more was said on the subject, accordingly, but Elsa sat silent and sulky through the rest of the meal, and Bert devoted himself to telling Freda the details of the latest ball game some time back.

A few days later Elsa put an arm around Winifred's waist.

"I've bought tickets for Saturday," she said; "ever so good — front row of the first balcony. You don't mind not being on the floor, do you?"

Winifred smiled.

"I don't believe I mind," she said, with amusement in her brown eyes, "if we had a seat on the roof. You forget it is the first time I've ever been to a theatre in my life! So I'm not particular."

"You poor darling!" Elsa looked pityingly at her. "Well, you shall have *one* good time, anyway! I tell you what we'll do. Brenda Gray is going too, and we've planned

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to meet up town and lunch first, and all go together. Don't you think that will be fun?"

"Why, yes," said Winifred; "only—"

"Only what? Don't be pokey, Freda, will you?"

"I hope not," Freda replied, flushing. "I only thought—if you had exceeded your allowance—you ought not to give me a lunch."

"Oh, pshaw!" Elsa laughed and patted her on the back. "I can get all the money I want from dad any time. That's all right."

"Well," said the younger girl, only half convinced. "What play are we going to see?"

Elsa looked solemn and shook her head. "That's a secret. You must wait and see; it would spoil the fun to tell you beforehand."

Winifred gazed at her with an instant's

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doubt. Would Elsa — could she be so disobedient? Oh, no, no! It was unkind to think such a thing of her friend. Of course she would not! Yet why make a mystery?

"Now, Freda West! Do you suppose I know anything, or don't you?"

Elsa had read the thought in the clear eyes which always told truth.

"Oh, Elsa, of course —"

"Well, then, do let me do things my own way!" Elsa said impatiently, and she ran downstairs and slammed the front door after her.

"There now, isn't this fine?" asked Elsa, as at one o'clock on the following Saturday she marched Winifred into the restaurant and saw her friend Brenda Gray signalling to her from the small table she had already secured. "Brenda, my love, you're a genius to have got this table,

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for there's not another left, so far as I can see."

"That comes of being early on the field; you were never noted for that quality yourself, Elsa *mia*." Miss Gray laughed, shaking hands with Winifred while she looked at the other. Winifred thought she looked very impressive in her pale blue broadcloth suit and "picture hat," with a gold lorgnette hanging by a chain round her neck. Even Elsa was more simply dressed. But now the latter was examining the bill of fare, and ordering what sounded like a very gorgeous repast.

"Elsa, I don't care what I have, you know," Winifred said in a low voice.

"Well, I do; and so does Brenda!"

"Rather!" remarked that young lady. "The bother is, you can't get much of anything short of a big hotel. I like the Touraine."

The little country girl, happily, was not

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so hard to please, and the bouillon and breaded cutlets and various other edibles seemed very good indeed. The older girls ate with a languid air, criticising each dish, but managing to dispose of a fair amount, all the same, and as the food disappeared, they talked of many matters not comprehended by the silent third member of the party. Winifred did not resent this; she only thought it somewhat rude in them to glance at her and then go off into fits of causeless laughter, once or twice. She could not see the joke, and wondered uncomfortably if something was wrong with her that she had not noticed.

At last they all rose. Elsa paid the bill with a careless manner, and presently they were in a car, where Winifred sat on one side and the two girls opposite, and where again they glanced at her and instantly choked with mirth, putting their handkerchiefs before their mouths.

Winifred was beginning to feel hurt and

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angry, but she tried to think that they meant nothing, and looked away from them for the rest of the trip. It was a short trip, and in a few minutes the party were before the doors of the theatre. Elsa seemed in an unaccountable hurry, considering that she had tickets for reserved seats, and swept through the vestibule in such a rush that Winifred had no time to look about. It was only when they were in the theatre itself, and an usher had come forward to show them to their places, that her usual quiet and ease of manner returned. One might have supposed she had safely passed some danger.

Once in the little folding chair which bore the same number as her ticket, she drew a long breath, and said something to Brenda in a voice too low for other ears; something which made Miss Gray laugh once again in that way so disturbing to Winifred. This time, however, Winifred did not notice it, for she was taking in the features of the

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unknown scene with wondering interest, — the great horse-shoe space with its tiers of little velvet chairs like her own; the mass of heads on the floor; the private boxes, looking so cosey and comfortable; the pretty effect of mingled colors in the dresses of the audience; the remarkable painted drop-curtain above the stage — and, with a delighted thrill, the orchestra, whose stringed instruments were tuning up suggestively.

Elsa was speaking, and she started. A programme had been put into her hand, and she stared at the words in large letters which immediately caught her eye, not fully understanding their meaning at first: —

"SAUCY SARAH JANE"

She stared at them so blankly that Elsa nudged her elbow. "Do you see?" she whispered. Winifred turned her eyes — honest, wondering, doubting eyes — from the programme to Elsa's face. Elsa was laugh-

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ing; Brenda was laughing, leaning forward to watch the result of the disclosure; to see what would happen. Nothing happened for a few moments. Winifred merely gazed into her friend's eyes with her own steadfast ones, while a bright spot of red appeared in each cheek. Elsa ceased laughing presently, and dropped her own eyes. She fidgeted under that clear look. She blushed.

"Now, Freda, what's the use of behaving like that?" she said, still in a whisper; "can't you see a joke? It was awfully funny to get you here without your suspecting a thing; that's what we kept laughing at; but we didn't mean to make you so mad. And you needn't feel badly about mother, because you are not a bit to blame; you didn't know what you were coming to see. It's all my doings, and you're all right, and if she ever finds out about it, — why, I'll tell her so. Honest, I will. Why,

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what are you going to do about it, if I bring you here?"

"I'm going to go home," said Winifred. She rose as she spoke, and took her jacket from where it hung on the back of her seat.

"'Going to go home!'" repeated Elsa, in astonishment. "Oh, Freda! how can you be so silly! Just think—when I bought this expensive ticket so that you should have a good time."

"I'm sorry you did, but I'll pay for the ticket myself. I can do that, but I can't stay."

"Well, Freda, I think you are mean! And only think how queer it will look for you to get right up and go out now! And there are girls I know here, and they'll ask what was the matter, and I'll have to tell them my friend got mad and whisked off home in a huff!"

"Tell them what you like," said Wini-

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fred, sturdily, pulling on her jacket; "I'm going home!"

"Freda — listen — wait till the first act's over, anyway; then if you go, people may think you felt sick, or it was the heat, or something; and perhaps you won't *want* to go when you've seen some of it. Wait!"

But Winifred was walking resolutely along the row of empty seats, and Elsa saw that to attempt to hold her back by force would attract altogether too much notice. With an angry gesture she sat down again in her own seat, and explained matters to the eagerly attentive Brenda.

"Well, I declare!" said Miss Gray; "I didn't think she had so much to her, little mousey thing. Maybe she'll get over it, and come back, after all!"

But Winifred had no thought of turning back. She got out of the big building with the feeling of escaping some wicked

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trap, and walked toward the avenue so fast that several persons observing her haste and her flushed and troubled face, turned to look after her. "If only I can get in without meeting any one; if only I can get into my own room," she kept saying to herself. And she had only reached the second floor when she met Bert, rushing downstairs at top speed.

"Hullo! nearly knocked you down, didn't I? Beg pardon, I'm sure. Thought you were out — why, what's up?"

"Nothing, — at least, no matter," Winifred answered, trying to pass him.

"I don't know about that. You are crying! Are you hurt? Sick?"

"No, no. I'm all right; please — I want to go to my room."

But the young man stood still, frowning. "If any of those brutes of musical fellows have been rude to you about your playing —"

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Winifred gave a choked little laugh that sounded like a sob.

"They haven't a thing to do with it! Please, Bert—"

The lad gently took hold of her by the arms, and turned her around so that he could see her face.

"Winifred, what is '*it*'? Is it Elsa?"

But Winifred would not answer that question. She hid her face and cried.

"Well, I'll wager it's she that is to blame, then," he said. "Elsa is a good girl, but she can be mighty disagreeable sometimes. Don't you mind; she'll be awfully sorry by and by, and it will be all right."

"Oh, I'm not—I'm not—angry," said poor Freda; "I—just want to go to my room. You can't help me, really. I'll feel better soon, if—if I can be alone a little while."

Bert nodded, patted her shoulder reassuringly, and ran on downstairs.

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"All that girls want when they're put out, is a good cry," he told himself.

It may be supposed that neither of the two girls enjoyed meeting at dinner that evening. It soon dawned upon Mrs. Beaconside that a cloud had come between Elsa and the young guest, but she knew that a schoolgirl quarrel is not apt to last long, and wisely took no notice of the silence and stiffness which existed between the pair. Bert, for reasons of his own, likewise refrained from comment. But after dinner he told Elsa he wanted to speak to her, and they went off into the library together. Bert shut the door and leaned against it.

"Well, you're a nice girl, aren't you?" he asked sarcastically.

"What's the matter now?" Elsa began to feel uneasy.

"How came you to go to that play this afternoon?"

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"Which one?"

"Oh, come, don't hedge! — you know well enough which one!"

"So she told, did she, the mean little sneak!" asked Elsa, with flashing eyes.

"It's my turn to ask 'which'? To whom do you refer in that way?"

Bert looked more angry than his sister ever remembered to have seen him.

"Winifred, of course," she answered sullenly. "*Did* she tell you?"

"No, she didn't; and you ought to know she wouldn't!" Bert shouted.

"I don't see how you knew anything about it, then."

"Very likely not," said the young man, scornfully; "and as you're not above being deceitful and treacherous yourself, you expect other people to be. Winifred! You are not fit to put her boots on for her."

Elsa burst into tears, but her brother was not softened.

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"The reason I know where you went this afternoon," he said, "is that I happened to be passing the theatre on the opposite side of the street as the people came out, and saw you and that crazy-headed Gray girl in the crowd. If Freda or any one else had told me that you were capable of doing what you have, I wouldn't have believed them. You ought to be perfectly ashamed of yourself!"

Elsa cried on, and Bert gave her ten minutes more of his views with unabated vigor. At last a sudden thought struck him. He came closer.

"Did you try to make that child go with you? Was that why she came in crying before three o'clock?"

Silence.

"Elsa, answer me at once!"

"Yes,—if you will bother so. Brenda and I took her without telling her what the play was."

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"And she wouldn't stay?"

"No; she flounced straight out of the theatre before the curtain went up."

"Good work! Good for little Freda! I'd give fifty dollars if I had a sister like that!"

Elsa still continued to cry. Her bent head and shoulders suddenly touched Bert's tender heart. He went over and put his arms round her.

"Now, look here, Elsa, you acted like fury to-day, and you know it. Take your medicine; go right up to mother and tell her the truth."

"Oh, Bert — I can't."

"You can too. It's the only way. You know you're sorry for what you did. You know you didn't really enjoy yourself — now did you?"

"No," she owned in his ear, "I didn't. I hated that Nonnie what's-her-name; she was perfectly horrid, and I wished I hadn't gone!"

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Bert gave her an approving kiss. "Of course you did! Another time I hope you'll believe what I say; a man knows about these things. Now believe what I say about facing the music; go right upstairs to mother!"

Elsa went.

About nine o'clock, just as Winifred had begun to brush out her hair before going to bed, a light tap came at her door, and Elsa entered — a very different Elsa from the one she had last seen. This one was very gentle and appealing, and began by saying as she came across the floor: —

"Freda, I want to make up. Will you forgive me?"

The two girls, sad and red-eyed from long crying, looked into each other's faces, and then drew close, and kissed.

"I was all wrong, and you were all right," whispered Elsa presently, as they sat side by side on the bed. "Bert says he wishes he

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had a sister like you! Hard on me, isn't it?"

"But how did he know? Oh, Elsa — you don't — you can't think I told!"

"He saw me coming out. He scolded me fearfully, but he has made up, too, now. And mother — she has been so dear!" Elsa cried again a little.

Winifred and she talked for half an hour or more, feeling much nearer to one another than they had ever done before, and then kissed again and separated.

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CHAPTER X.

The Brown House in the Block.

JANUARY and February had slipped away, and March was in its second week, and seemingly already getting ready to go out like a lion. The fierce wind tore through the streets, driving the dust before it in blinding clouds, and Winifred, battling against its force to reach her teacher's house at the South End, had her heavy golf cape twice blown clean over her head. For the second time she laid her violin-case down to free her head of the enclosing folds, but on this occasion it was another pair of hands which did the work, and looking up in surprise she saw the gypsy face of Bolinski smiling down at her.

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"Oh, it is you!" she said, straightening her felt hat which the cape had knocked on one side; "I wondered who was kind enough to help me. It happened not ten minutes before, and two boys just stood and shouted with glee!"

The Hungarian still smiled. "Boys,—they are pigs!" he said; "I know it, for I was one myself not so long ago. But see now what it is to be a gypsy, with the gift of second sight! An instant since, I was at the other end of the town, walking along with no thought but of my own affairs, when suddenly I saw a little picture all in my mind, very small, like a shadow-photograph, of my friend the Alpine Fay in distress. Hey, presto! I am here to serve her! Is that not wonderful—eh?"

Winifred laughed. She had seen Bolinski a number of times during the winter, and had grown used to his way of talking.

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"Very wonderful indeed," she said; "almost too wonderful to be true!"

Bolinski sighed. "You have no faith in my powers, Fräulein."

"I'm only an American, you know, and Americans are commonplace. But if you could tell me where I should be this time next week — why, I might believe in your 'second sight' as you call it."

"Where you will be this time next week? That is easy enough — you will be with Rohricht, playing."

Winifred's face had a wistfulness he could not comprehend as she answered: "I wish I might be. Your second sight has failed, Herr Bolinski."

He would have demanded an explanation, but they had reached the house and there was no time for more conversation.

Herr Rohricht was later than usual in meeting his pupil this particular morning, and Winifred had played through a long

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piece of the difficult music which lay on the piano when he came rushing tumultuously into the music room. His red hair stood out from his head; his eyes had a peculiar pale blue glare which his students always associated with bad weather, and knew to be a storm signal, and a thunder-cloud sat on his brow above the round spectacles.

The lion-mood of the March morning was in him, and do what she would, Winifred met nothing but cross looks and crosser words. Her patience and self-control had no effect; he raved, he stamped, he ran his hands through his hair till it stood actually on end; finally, gazing with a frozen stare at the 'cello against the wall, and striking his broad chest with his clinched hand, the musician demanded in a voice quite tremulous with passion, whether ever, in the entire course of time, a violinist had been expected to teach one

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so utterly and incurably stupid as this girl here?

The 'cello very naturally made no reply to this question, but the girl thus alluded to answered it in a way fully as eloquent as words.

She laid her violin down upon the cover of the piano, and silently bowed her face on it. Herr Rohricht, while never removing his gaze from the unresponsive 'cello, saw the action out of the corner of his eye. His heart smote him. Presently he turned about and took a turn or two up and down the room. Still Winifred's face was hidden, and she made no sign. He cleared his throat loudly. He walked to the window and looked out. He came back and touched the bent head with one big finger. "Come, we will try once more," he said gruffly.

Winifred lifted a very pale face. Her lips were quivering.

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"I know I have played badly to-day," she said in a dull voice; "you have a right to find fault. Only — only — if you had known it was the last lesson, I don't think you would have been quite so hard on me!"

"The last lesson? What does that mean — hey?"

"Yes, the last lesson. I have got to give up coming here — got to go away. I am going to-morrow. So, you see —" she stopped, biting her under lip.

Rohricht seized her in one strong arm, dropped on a chair, and sat, holding her against his shoulder, as she had seen him hold little Hilda.

"Fredachen," he said, in a tone of exquisite tenderness, "tell me all!"

Winifred swallowed down a rising sob. It was silly to cry; she would not cry; and yet it was harder not to, now that he spoke so gently, than before, when he was so harsh.

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But in a few moments she had mastered her voice and could speak almost steadily.

"I have to leave my friends here because Mr. Beaconside is very ill. It is something sudden. I don't know just what is the matter with him, and I don't like to ask. Elsa doesn't know, either. They say it is a sort of breaking-down, because he has worked so hard at his office. But he is very sick indeed, and the house has to be kept quiet, and they have to have two trained nurses. You see they need my room, and it is not right for me to stay. I have telegraphed my father this morning that I am coming home to-morrow. Of course it is lovely to see all my dear own home people, and yet — I *did* want to finish my lessons, my lessons that I came away for; and I didn't want to go before I had." She bit her trembling lip again.

The encircling pressure of the fatherly arm tightened.

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"You shall not go!" The tone was decided.

"Oh, but I must!" Winifred smiled a faint little smile. "You see, I haven't any one else to stay with in Boston, and Mrs. Beaconside won't hear of my going to a boarding-house. She says I am too young."

Rohricht snorted. "Boarding-house! A baby go alone to board! *Bewahre! Ach!* I have it! I have it! Wait thou here for me and be of good courage; all shall yet be arranged." With a beaming countenance he nodded at her and dashed out of the room. Winifred heard him blustering through the house like a good-natured March wind, now, crying, "*Meine Frau! Meine Frau! wo ist meine Frau!*" And smiling to herself at the dear man's thinking he or his "Frau" could prevent her going away, she took up her Cremona and carefully put it in its case. It would never sound in the big, bare room again. She

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laid a caressing hand on the piano; she would no more see Hermann's fair head above it, nor watch the flying fingers on its keys. She was going away to-morrow.

Time passed. She looked at the clock. It was time to put on her hat and cape, but how could she go until Herr Rohricht returned? She put on her hat, and slowly drew on her gloves. He must come in another minute.

Suddenly she was made aware of a sound coming up the stairs — a sound of feet and voices. Nearer and nearer they came. She heard the big bass of Rohricht, the alto of a woman's tones, the tenor of a boy's, the birdlike treble of a young child's, and into the room came the violinist, his hands outstretched toward Winifred, and followed by Frau Rohricht and Hermann, also holding out their hands, whilst little Hilda danced behind saying, "*Wilkommen! wilkommen!*"

Winifred gazed, astonished. Frau Roh-

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richt came up to her and took her hand in both her own.

"Fräulein Freda," she said, "my husband tells me that you have to leave your friends, Meester and Meeses Beaconside, and that you will have to go home to the country. It is not well that you give up the lessons here. Will you come to us? Will you be one of our daughters, Herr Rohricht's and mine, till the springtime?"

A great crimson glow came up into the girl's face.

"Oh, Frau Rohricht!" she murmured.

"Yes, yes; it is all settled!" cried Hermann; "thou must come, and, ah! how we will play this piano and violin together!"

"Oh, but I'm afraid I ought not," Winifred said, looking from one to another. "I shall be in the way — you have so many now."

"Ta, ta!" shouted Rohricht himself. "Is not Anna married and gone? Is there not

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her room? Come, it is settled, *fixed*, as you Americans say. This very evening you will come to us. Go home now, my child, pack your trunk, and return to us in time for supper."

Winifred was overwhelmed. She would still have hesitated, but the wise little Frau bent and kissed her cheek, and that motherly kiss was a final argument.

She left the kindly household, promising to come back at five in the afternoon, and went straight to the telegraph office, where she despatched a second message to her father in East Village; and then hurried back to the avenue, and told Mrs. Beaconside and Elsa her news. They were both delighted. Mrs. Beaconside had felt very badly at letting her go, and had fully understood the bitter disappointment it was to forfeit the valuable music lessons of the next two months, and this happy solution of the problem pleased her accordingly.

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"Of course it isn't quite settled, even now," Winifred said, "because I must hear from father and mother before I know whether I can stay at Herr Rohricht's. But I think they will let me. I am going to write to them all about it at once."

She mailed a long letter home on her way back to the violinist's that afternoon, explaining all the circumstances at length.

It was rather a sad way to leave the Beaconside household, but both mother and daughter were brave, and chose to take the trial that had come to them cheerfully. Mrs. Beaconside said she expected her husband — who had a good constitution — to be himself again before long; and Elsa begged Winifred to "drop in to lunch often," and not to forget them all.

She and Winifred had somehow seemed to understand each other better since the unfortunate affair of the play — an error Elsa had atoned for at the time by insisting

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on sending her with Mrs. Beaconside to a very charming concert of Paderewski's, in her place.

So it was with the warmest feelings of friendship, on both sides, that her stay on the avenue came to a close.

And it was the warmest friendship that opened to her the doors of The Brown House in the Block.

Gretel and Hermann had been on the watch for her coming for at least an hour before she arrived, and ran to let her in.

"Did the mother tell thee — I *may* say '*thou*,' may I not? — that thou and I were to share the same room?" Gretel asked, winding her arm around Winifred's waist. "Anna and I slept there together until Barthold took her away, and it has been so lonely since. Wilt thou like to be with me?"

"Yes, indeed," the other answered, pressing the pretty, dimpled hand that held her.

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"I am sure it will be very nice to be with you."

Gretel looked wistfully into the brown eyes with a little shadow in her blue ones. "Americans do not say 'thou,' do they? I wish it was also the custom here; to us it means so much to say '*du*' when we love any one!"

Winifred laughed. "I think we mean just the same thing when we say 'you'; but the other is prettier. You must teach me German while I am here!"

They had now reached the top floor, and Gretel led the way into a brightly papered chamber with two little white beds side by side in it.

"There — we shall be here," she said; "does it look pleasant, Freda?"

Winifred looked around with admiration, — everything was so simple, so fresh, and so homelike. The toilet china was gayly painted in red and blue and gold, and the

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bedsteads were of wood, painted also, as were the backs of the chairs. Gretel said that all these had been brought over from Germany, years ago.

"The father and the mother came over first," she told Winifred, "and we three children — Anna, Hermann, and I — were left behind with the *Grossmutter*. Then when they found it was well to stay in America, they sent for us, and we came. The *Grossmutter*, — she is, as Americans say, *economical;* she wastes nothing. And she hears that it is expensive across the water; that everything costs; so she packs up all that we possess, — oh, yes, — even to the little dishes for pies — and brings with her a load like a haystack! How we ever got through the Custom House I'm sure I cannot tell, and I was too young to notice much, but I remember sitting a long time on a box and crying with weariness after leaving the ship."

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"And 'Lenchen and Hilda were born over here, then?"

"So. We have all been to school here, — all except Hermann and the baby, — so we talk English. Hermann talks it too, but more brokenly. He has had lessons at home, and has heard us talking. Hilda speaks very little yet, and the *Grossmutter*, almost none. Of course we always speak German when we are by ourselves."

"I hope you will speak it just the same now I am here. I should love to learn German."

The girls had a pleasant hour before supper, putting away the newcomer's belongings, and settling which pegs in the closet and drawers in the big bureau should belong to her. Gretel would not listen to any doubts of her staying, and as they went downstairs with arms about one another, it looked as though a separation would grieve them both.

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The first family gathering around the table impressed Winifred very pleasantly. It was evident that every one came to the evening meal with the intention of being cheerful and entertaining, and laughter and lively conversation were the rule throughout. English and German were talked in turn, or both at once, creating a good deal of mirth; and it was surprising to find how readily a strange tongue could be understood when a set of merry young people talked in it. Winifred had learned the words for "bread," "butter," "milk," and "cake," by the time they left the table, and begged them to speak only German at breakfast next morning.

After supper, and when 'Lenchen and Hilda had gone to bed, the bell rang, and Bolinski entered. He was evidently astonished to find Winifred one of the circle, and more so on being told that she was to stay with the Rohrichts if her parents

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agreed. He disguised his feelings, however, and assuming his mysterious air, murmured — "I knew it!"

"*Ach*, what a fellow thou art with thy fables!" Hermann cried, laughing. "How couldst thou have known? A pretty story, indeed!"

Franz nodded. "In my little crystal ball I saw it," he said gravely. "I saw the Fräulein Freda here in your midst. I said to myself, 'Get thy violin, my lad, and be off to play the young ladies one of thy gypsy dances!'" The young people laughed: they took Bolinski for a jester.

He was in his wildest vein, it seemed, and the violin wailed and sobbed and screamed and sighed; and again one could fancy the black heath and the "red, November moon," and the whirling figures of the gypsy dancers.

At its quickest and weirdest, he flung the violin down.

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"Enough!" he cried. "Let us tell fortunes!"

His great eyes looked like black caverns with a light in their depths. Winifred shrank away as he came toward her; she put her hands behind her.

"You shall not tell mine!" she said hastily.

"Hey, then, and why not?" laughed Rohricht, in great amusement; "it is only sport: it will not hurt thee!"

"My mother does not like telling fortunes," Winifred answered. "Once a woman wanted to tell mine at East Village, and mother would not let her."

"But your mother would not perhaps feel so averse in this case," said Bolinski, in a soft and soothing voice, while he never took his strange gaze from her troubled face. "I will tell you no harm, I promise."

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"And it is only sport, as the father says!" whispered Gretel; "*I* am not afraid to have him tell *my* fortune!"

Winifred looked appealingly at the others, and Frau Rohricht smiled kindly at her. "Do as seems best, my child," she said, knitting away on a long blue stocking as she spoke. Hermann took his friend's hand in his.

"I wish thou wouldst let Franz read thy hand," he said, "for I would like to hear where thou wilt be when thou art a woman, and if thou still lovest thy violin!"

Winifred's face showed plainly enough the struggle which was going on in her mind. She disliked to seem disagreeable, and to give offence to the sensitive Hungarian; but still more, she disliked to let him tell her fortune. He solved her difficulties himself.

"Well, Fräulein Freda," he said, step-

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ping back, and dropping the hand he had been extending toward her, "I would not trouble you. You do not wish to hear what I have to say; so be it."

Winifred colored painfully, but she did not say anything. Only, she raised her soft eyes with a sweet appeal in them to Bolinski's.

His own kindled anew; he stretched his arm again toward her, but this time with his finger pointing forward.

"No," he said, "I shall not read your hand, since you do not desire it. But what can your hand tell in comparison with your eyes? Those are beyond your control; they tell all you feel, all you think, all you hope. No, — do not turn pale" (his voice sank to its gentlest); "I see nothing in those brown eyes which you should wish to hide; nothing but the story of a beautiful future, — the life of a beautiful soul."

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He made a graceful gesture of farewell which, beginning with Freda, included the whole room, and taking up his violin, abruptly left.

"Well, that is pretty behavior, not to tell my fortune at least!" said Gretel, with a pretended pout. "Franz grows more unaccountable every day."

Hermann murmured softly, "I liked much what he said, however."

Frau Rohricht and the *Grossmutter* exchanged a glance and a smile.

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CHAPTER XI.

April Woods.

WINIFRED had the happy gift of fitting quickly and smoothly into new surroundings. She felt at home with the Rohrichts at once, and in a week's time had lost all feeling of strangeness. Her parents had consented to her staying till the end of the term — about May twentieth — and she settled down with a feeling of ease and peace which, it must be confessed, she had never had in the great house on the avenue.

She picked up the language of her hosts with rapidity, and caught up a number of little ways hitherto unknown to her, such as saying on rising from table, "*gesegnete*

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Mahlzeit," or, "blessed mealtime"; one of the old German customs which Rohricht rigidly adhered to.

As for her music, it throve in this new atmosphere like a rare plant in a hot-house. At all hours of the day some one was making music, or talking of music, and one could scarcely go upstairs or down without meeting a pupil with a violin, or some foreign-looking individual with long hair and fur-trimmed overcoat, come to see the violinist on musical business. The house seemed never long silent, for when the violins and the rest of the stringed instruments were not singing and sighing, the piano in the music room would be thrilling under Hermann's or Gretel's fingers. Winifred naturally found practising quite a new affair under such favorable conditions, and her teacher was not slow to perceive the change in her playing.

One day, as they prepared for their les-

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son, Rohricht took away from her the étude she was about to begin, and set up something else in its place. He watched her face as she looked at it.

"Well," he asked, "are you afraid of it?"

Winifred looked up with a bright blush of surprise and pleasure.

"Afraid? No; but you must remember what you said once."

"You have taken great steps since then."

She was a little bit afraid, after all; but it was one of Rohricht's mild mornings, and at the end of the hour it was plain that she had not disappointed him. As he rose from the piano, he said abruptly:—

"You will play the '*Gesangscene*' at the pupils' concert in May."

Winifred gasped. It was the first she had heard about any pupils' concert. She would have liked to ask some questions, but the violinist had already left the room,

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"She was a little bit afraid, after all"

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and an instant after she heard him leave the house, and going to the window, saw him walking rapidly down the street in company with a particularly Bohemian-looking person in a cloak.

Winifred sought out Hermann, and put her questions to him.

"What is it like — a pupils' concert? Is it a big thing, with a crowd of people?"

"That depends on the teacher," Hermann answered. "In my father's case, — yes, it is a very big thing. He will probably hire Steinert Hall, and it will be full of people, all people knowing of music, — musicians, critics, *dillettanti*, — an audience to do thy best to please, Freda!"

Poor Winifred felt a chill run down her spine. All the shyness, which her Boston winter had gone far to cure, returned in its worst form, and she felt her knees tremble under her.

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"Oh, Hermann, how perfectly dreadful!" she said in a choking voice.

Hermann laughed.

"Thou dost not need to be afraid,—*thou*," he answered positively; "now, that young lady who comes on Tuesdays—*ach!* She may well fear!"

Winifred remembered the young lady who came on Tuesdays—a rich girl whom she had met once at the Beaconside mansion, and who had treated her then with extreme rudeness. They had met on the step at Rohrichts' one day, and the other girl had not seemed to recognize her.

"I sometimes laugh—I cannot help overhearing—when the father is giving her her lesson," the boy went on; "she is always, when she first comes in, very much at ease, very cheerful, very—how does one say it?—*sure;* then she takes her violin. 'No!' my father cries, '*never* hold it so; always *so!*' Presently I hear

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a little sound like a mouse in a crack, '*sq-ue-ak!*' My father cries out again. Again '*squeak!*' — Such notes! One day Franz is here, in the next room. 'For the pity of pitifulness, what sick kitten is mewing to the piano to-day?' says he. I laughed till I wept."

Winifred smiled faintly.

"Oh, but Hermann, I can never do it!" she broke out suddenly.

"Do what? Play like a little mouse squeaking? Thou sayest true, Freda: thou never canst. Never mind; the father prefers thy manner of making music!"

"Hermann, you are not kind to laugh at me. I am very much worried."

Hermann grew grave at once.

"I am sorry," he said; "but truly, there is no cause. Believe what I say, — there is no cause. Also, if the father did not know that thou wert able to play it, he would

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never have given thee the '*Gesangscene.*' He is very wise, — my father."

Winifred was silent.

"Thy one fault is that thou hast not enough trust, Freda. Thou must trust thyself, and thy teacher."

"But all those people — those critics!"

"They will like thee," was Hermann's consoling answer. He came up and took hold of the listless hand that hung by her side. "All people like thee, Freda."

"People may like one and yet not like what one does — not like one's music."

Hermann laughed again, very softly.

"*Ach!* Freda, Freda! If only I were not forbidden to tell thee what is said of thy playing! Why, my father, Barthold, Franz — are they not so good critics (and better) as those others who come to hear at the concert? And do they not all feel pride in thee?"

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"Do they?" whispered Winifred. A warm feeling crept into her desponding heart; a sudden courage came to her.

"So. And when the concert arrives, they will all be there, and each will be saying, 'She will do best — our Fredachen!'"

Winifred's eyes shone; she held up her head. If her friends thought that, she would never fail them; not if she died of shyness.

At that moment little Hilda ran into the room.

"The mother says, come to dinner, all!" she said imperiously, and with a small but firm hand she seized Freda and Hermann, and pulled them to the door.

"There is potato soup, to-day," she announced; "but it is not good if it grows cold before one eats it. And if you are late, the mother will not let you have apple-dumplings afterward!"

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After this, Winifred set her face steadfastly toward the goal of the pupils' concert, and allowed no weak fears to unnerve her.

She practised so earnestly, indeed, that she did not give herself time enough for due rest and recreation, and Rohricht, who saw a number of things that one would not have supposed likely, presently perceived that the face of his favorite pupil was losing color, and that she was thinner than she had been. Whereupon, he promptly restricted the hours of practising, and ordered her to go out and amuse herself.

"Where shall I go?" asked Winifred, half distressed and half amused.

"Go and see pictures; go and look in at the shop-windows; go where you will,—only *go!* If you do nothing but play, you will not play well. The mind needs change."

Winifred smiled, sighed, and reluctantly put up her Cremona. It was a warm morn-

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ing in April, and against the turquoise sky she could see red maple-buds as she looked out of the window. They gave her a little homesick pang. The red maple-buds would soon be coming out in the old garden at Westholme, and she would not be there to see them. Well, it was not very long before she would be in the old garden — only until lilac-time!

She got her hat and gloves, threw her jacket over her arm, and started downstairs; she would go for a walk. Gretel was spending the day with her married sister, to help her with some spring sewing, but Hermann was in the parlor; she would ask him to go with her. Hermann sprang up in delight, caught his cap from its peg in the hall, and announced himself ready for any manner of expedition. They were going along at a good pace — for Hermann could walk fast with the help of a cane, and rarely ran into obstructions — when Winifred saw the famil-

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iar figure of the young Hungarian advancing toward them. Bolinski looked a little more gypsylike than usual, with a tiny scarlet feather in the band of his soft, wide-brimmed felt hat. "Well met!" he cried, as he reached the two friends; "and where do you go, this fine morning?"

"Hermann and I want a walk; we are going to smell the flowers in the Public Garden. Will you come with us?"

Bolinski shook his head. "I abominate the Public Garden; it, its pin-cushion flower-beds, and its nursemaids. I am a child of Nature; I am for the woods, to see the sap push the buds through the bark. Will *you* go with *me?*"

"To the woods! How lovely! But where can you find any woods here?"

"I will show you," said the Hungarian, smiling.

"Is it far? Shall we get back to dinner?" Winifred was divided betwixt de-

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sire to go and fear of inconveniencing Frau Rohricht. Bolinski tossed back his hair — a gesture common to him when impatient.

"It is not very far, — neither is it very near. As to dinner — behold mine!" He pulled a bread roll out of his pocket and replaced it again.

"I have no concern for time or food; I am weary of four walls and the smells of my boarding-place, — soup, coffee, washing — " he made a grimace. "The sap is in my veins as in the tree-trunks, and my blood is full of '*Wanderlust*.' What is a dinner more or less? What matter this time or an hour later? I go to the woods; will you come with me?"

"I will if you will let me run back to the house and speak to Frau Rohricht — " Winifred was beginning, when the appearance of Rohricht himself brought a happy solution of her difficulty. He was in haste, as usual, but consented to pause a moment

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and advise her what to do. No sooner had he understood the question, than he cried heartily: —

"The very thing! Go, go, go, as fast as you can, — all three. Yes, yes, — I will explain and excuse to the Frau. So you come in before the day gets too late, it is all well, all right." He waved his hand and ran from them, and much reassured, Winifred and Hermann prepared to follow their guide.

Bolinski was sufficiently practical to know that his companions had no bread rolls in their pockets, and before leaving the neighborhood of shops, turned into a bakery and purchased some more rolls, and a half-dozen little cakes. Nor would he allow any one else to carry them, though indeed the appearance of a very picturesque young man in brown velveteen, with a red feather in his hat, carrying two good-sized paper bags, was a little odd. But Bolinski cared

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nothing for that, and the opinion of his fellow-men sat at all times lightly upon him.

He led the young people by streets unfamiliar to a railway station, bought tickets with no heed of their plea to pay their share, and presently had them in a train which after a short journey left them in a country quite unknown. And then a little walk, and they were in the woods — the beautiful, shy, half-opened April woods! Winifred drew a long breath. She knew now how homesick she had been all winter, — not merely for home faces and home voices, but for the look and the scent of the country. Hermann took off his cap, and let the soft air play with his blond locks; Bolinski, on his part, had doffed the wide-brimmed felt the instant they left the cars, and now, as their steps led them into a little glade under the trees, he flung it upon the ground, and himself after it.

"Ah! but that is sweet!" he murmured.

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He lay on a carpet of last year's fallen leaves, copper-pink and golden-yellow, between whose curled shapes shot the vivid green spires of young grasses. The stems of half-grown trees were all about, silvery, slender, and some looking damply black through emerald moss and white lichen. He wound his arm about the nearest, and laid his cheek caressingly against the bark, while at the same time he began to speak in a language Winifred had never heard before.

It sounded as if he were repeating poetry, and when he ceased, she asked if it were so. He sat up with shining eyes.

"Your pardon, Fräulein Freda! Yes, I was repeating the Spring Song of one of my own poets. I wish you knew Hungarian."

"Can't you translate it for us?"

He shook his head doubtfully. "One

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can translate the bare words, but the grace, the beauty, — one loses that!"

"*Ach*, Franz!" broke in Hermann, "thou art so modest! Do but try!"

The Hungarian pondered, playing with the woolly leaves of a young plant which grew beside him. Winifred laid her jacket on the ground and seated herself upon it. She looked up at the tracery of budding twigs against the April sky, and sighed, as we all sometimes sigh in the spring-time.

Then Franz began to speak: —

"Leaf, little leaf, soft as an infant child's finger,
Leaf, more strong than the stern prison-bars of the frost,
Pushing thy way, without hurry, yet never retreating,
Sunward and skyward,
Teach me thy softness, thy strength!

"Flower, little flower, pure as the soul of a maiden,
Timidly peeping between the dry leaves of dead summers,
New as the sky after storm, as the dawn after darkness,
Glad and rejoicing,
Teach my thy fragrance, thy joy!

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"Heart in my bosom, dark wrapt in the gloom of the winter,
Heart heavy-laden with burdens of sorrow and wrong, —
Push past the bars of the prison thyself hath created,
Sunward and skyward,
Like the leaf, like the flower!"

"Oh, how pretty that is!" said Winifred. "I wish you would write that out for me, if you don't mind; I would like to paste it in my scrap-book."

The Hungarian shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"If I do, you will not be able to decipher it; I write atrociously. What does a gypsy want with pens and ink? They beat me to make me learn how to write. Now to play the violin — that was different! But I do not want even my violin in the woods." He bent till his dark face touched the woolly leaved plant, and kissed it, saying something in his native tongue.

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He seemed carried out of himself with the pure love of Nature.

Winifred felt with him, but she belonged to a race more shy of showing its feelings, so she sat still and silent.

"Come," he cried after a while, jumping to his feet and throwing his arms out, "we lose time, and there is all the rest to see!" He led on through the trees, and Winifred put an arm lightly through Hermann's, for this walking was different from the city streets, and followed.

The sun shone down through the veil of leafing branches, too thin for shade; birds twittered and flew away as they advanced; a chipmunk ran smoothly over a fallen log and slipped out of sight — all was happy life.

Bolinski, slipping among the trunks as easily as the chipmunk, broke suddenly into song, — a song in the strange language of his people, of which the words said

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nothing, but the air much, — and being rapturously applauded by his audience of two, sang other songs, in a sweet voice of which few had any knowledge.

"I never sing in houses," he said, with a toss of the black hair out of his eyes; "I have no voice indoors. I only sing when I am under the sky — when I am a gypsy!"

By and by they sat down on a mossy bank to eat their lunch, and found themselves remarkably hungry. Nothing was left at the end but the crumbs and the paper bags, which last Bolinski stuffed into his pocket carefully.

"I never throw rubbish away in the woods," he said; "it is to insult the beautiful neatness of Nature."

"I wish you could teach that to the people who go on picnics near my home," said Winifred, laughing. "We find all sorts of rubbish in our lovely woods."

The young man muttered "Pigs!" with

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a face of disgust, and then joined in the mirth of his hearers.

It was a beautiful holiday, but it had to come to an end. As they made their way back across the fallen leaves and new grass to the edge of the woods, and thence to the little railway station, Winifred was aware of that pleasant fatigue which comes after delightful and healthy exertion; the sort of tiredness which leads to sound sleep and gentle dreams. Hermann, holding now by the arm of Bolinski, talked cheerily of the pleasures of spring and summer, of the joys of being able to go without a heavy coat, and to sit under the trees, and hear the birds sing. He did not know that the two who could enjoy so much more than he glanced tenderly at his bright, unconscious face, and then at one another. In the train going home, Bolinski was very silent.

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But at supper-time in the Rohrichts' house, as he sat with them at the table, Winifred found his black eyes on her face, and asked playfully if anything were the matter.

"Nothing," said the Hungarian, removing his gaze. "I was merely observing, Fräulein Freda, that in your cheeks is that same faint glow that we noticed in the wildflower we found. This morning there was none. The woods, the free air, — they are a grand medicine!"

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CHAPTER XII.

"*Brava! Bravissima!*"

APRIL was past, with its exquisite festival of Easter, and Winifred had received two boxes of Mayflowers from home, which she had shared with her friends, and now May herself was here. It seemed as if the weeks flew, now that the end of her Boston stay was so close at hand, and if the truth were told, Winifred wished that they could pass more slowly. She wanted to go home, but the life in the city was full of its own charm, — more especially since she had come into the Rohricht family, and had found herself in an atmosphere of music such as she had never known before. And above all, she desired more time in which to

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perfect herself for that fearful ordeal, the pupils' concert!

Rohricht perceived how the thought of it affected her, and would not allow her to talk of it with him. He even forbade her thinking of it, but this was an impossibility.

"A pupils' concert — what is it to make such a fuss about?" he said querulously, one day. "No one expects much of a set of crude novices; if you play decently, it is all *I* expect, for *my* part. Just keep your wits, and don't sit down in the middle and cry, as one wooden-headed girl I had been struggling over, did once, and I will ask no more!"

"Oh, but that's it!" said Winifred, between laughing and crying. "I am so afraid I shan't do you credit; and after all the pains you have taken with me!"

Rohricht took her by the two shoulders, and very gently shook her.

"Fredachen," he said, smiling, "if you were not the good, true-souled child that

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you are, I should say — 'This is to make effect:' what you in America call *fishing*, eh? But you — you do not *fish* [he said *feesh*]; you are sincere with me, — *nicht wahr?*"

Winifred's wide-open brown eyes answered him.

"*Ja wohl*, you mean what you say. Once for all, then, listen! You will do me credit; *you will do me credit.* Enough!"

She looked down, coloring with pleasure.

"Also," he went on, more gravely, "you must check this agitation about the future, if you are to be a professional. Think of all the world of artists, — think of all the painters, the writers, the actors. If each of these were to wring his hands and cry, 'I shall fail, I shall fail!' where would be Art? The true artist is modest, but he is also brave. And he remembers that not in the plaudits of his audience, but in the perfection of his work, lies the great success."

Winifred did not let herself worry so

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much after this, and made up her mind that she would simply do her best when the time came, and that the result was not a matter she could arrange.

Certainly, no young aspirant for fame had ever been blessed with kinder friends than herself. Bert Beaconside had not forgotten her when she left his mother's house, and had come over more than once for a little call in the evening. He seemed to enjoy his novel surroundings highly, on these occasions, and made himself very agreeable.

One Saturday, he took Winifred for a long "tramp," and as they walked, asked her a number of questions about the Rohricht family.

"That eldest girl isn't half-bad looking, you know," he said after a time. "I like light hair."

"Oh, Gretel is a perfect dear!" Winifred answered warmly; "and so is poor Hermann; the bravest boy you ever saw!"

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"Yes, he seems a nice little chap," Bert said thoughtfully; "the whole family are awfully nice, in fact. There's only one person I've seen that I haven't fancied — that black-eyed fellow *Bowinski*, or whatever his name is!"

"Oh, Mr. Bolinski!" said Winifred, laughing. "He's rather nice, too, in his own way."

"Very possibly," said Bert, with loftiness; "but it's not a way which appeals to *me*. *I* think him excessively bad form."

Winifred pondered this. With Bert and Elsa, *good form* and *bad form* were terms of great praise or dire condemnation.

"He's a Hungarian gypsy, you know," she said presently.

"Is he really? Well, he dresses like some sort of a freak," said Bert, scornfully. "For my part, I like to see a man wear a stiff collar."

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Bert's own collars certainly lacked nothing in this respect.

"You don't always remember that I am going to be an artist, and so must know some people who dress queerly, and who are not — like you and Elsa," Winifred said in her quiet voice.

Bert frowned. "No, I don't want to remember it. You ought to be with the right sort of people."

"I don't want any better sort of people than the Rohrichts."

"Ah, now, Freda! You know I like the Rohrichts, and you know how I care about the concert. I'm coming, and I'm going to bring a friend, — an awfully musical chap: plays the banjo like a breeze, — and we're going to sit in the front row and shy American Beauties at you. How's that?"

After all the long expectation and prepation, it took Winifred by surprise to wake

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up on the twentieth day of May and realize that the day of the concert had come. She sat up with a little shiver of excitement and called out to Gretel, who was already brushing her long golden hair at the dressing-table: —

"Oh, Gretel, is it a fine day?"

"A perfect day."

"Well, so far, so good! I dreaded a rain so much!"

At the breakfast table Winifred found several letters, and quickly opening one, cried joyfully: —

"Oh, I'm so glad! my dear Mr. Lane is coming to the concert. What a good thing he could manage it!"

Another letter brought loving messages from the home circle at East Village, while a third ran: —

"DEAREST FREDA: This is to wish you the goodest of good luck, and to say how

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sorry father and mother are not to come to your concert to-morrow afternoon. Father is so much better, we expect to sail for Europe next week, instead of the week after, as I told you when you were here last, and of course mother is tremendously busy; but Bert and Andy Carew and I are coming, and Bert says if you don't hear clapping enough, it won't be his fault, or Andy's. We expect you to cover yourself — and us — with glory!

"Till to-morrow,

"Yours lovingly,

"ELSA."

Lunch — it could hardly be called dinner — was served very early at number forty-eight that day, and immediately after, Gretel and Winifred ran upstairs to dress. Gretel's great concern was for her friend, and a more devoted lady's maid was never seen. At the end of her exertions, she felt fully rewarded.

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"*Ach*, Freda," she cried, "*du bist wunderschön!*"

Indeed Freda was a pretty picture of slim, brown-haired, brown-eyed young girlhood, in a white gown of soft material, made by her mother for this great occasion. She had grown much taller during the winter, and the sweet gravity of her expression, with her height, made her seem a year older than her actual age.

Gretel's delighted scrutiny was interrupted by a call from Hermann to "make haste, it was nearly time to go;" and she had to get on her own spring dress in a whirl.

"But for me it is no matter," she said, showing her pretty teeth in a smile of perfect good humor; "*I* am not to play to a big audience!"

People were going into the hall as the party reached its doors, and they glanced sympathetically at Winifred and her violin-case.

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In the waiting room were two or three of Rohricht's other pupils whom Winifred knew, and there was handshaking and interchange of: —

"O dear, aren't you frightened? I can hardly stand up!" and, "Don't you wish you could go away and hide somewhere?"

The girls stood nervously about, watching the little clock on the mantel-shelf, and starting violently whenever the door opened. The pupil whose playing Hermann had compared to the squeaking of a mouse now appeared on the scene, very much dressed and carrying a bouquet of roses. She looked quite at her ease, nodded carelessly to Winifred, and, taking her violin-case from the maid who had accompanied her, seated herself in an easy-chair, as if to mark her scorn for the evident agitation of some of her companions.

Winifred had seated herself also, but at the other side of the room. Her heart beat

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quickly, but on the whole, she was more composed than she could have hoped to be. Gretel had left her to join the rest of the Rohricht family party in the body of the hall, and after the first greetings, she preferred not to talk to any one.

A particularly nervous girl opened the door a crack and peeped out.

"O dear!" she gasped, shutting it again and turning a perfectly white face to the others in the room. "The hall is just *crammed!*"

A responsive shiver ran over the young performers. Only the girl with the bouquet smiled derisively.

The door opened again suddenly. A young man with black, shining eyes and long, decidedly dishevelled hair, came quickly toward Winifred and held out a cluster of scarlet wild columbine.

"For you!" he said in a breathless whisper; "I have but now come back,—

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all the morning I have searched the woods — You will wear them ? "

" Oh, Mr. Bolinski ! You got them for me ? You *are* kind ! "

She took the cluster of blossoms, and held them in one hand while she gave Franz the other. The Hungarian tossed back his hair.

" But you will wear them ? " he repeated eagerly. Winifred felt the eyes of all the room upon them, and flushed. Bolinski paid no heed to any one.

She gently withdrew her hand, and fastened the columbines in her white satin belt. " Of course I will wear them, when you took so much trouble for me," she said.

Bolinski stepped back and surveyed her from head to foot, much as Gretel had done. " The spirit of spring," he said so softly that only she heard. " Snow, with a touch of fire; and all life's promise in the shy eyes ! "

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With a wave of his hand, he bowed very low, turned, and left her.

An instant after, the first name on the programme was called, and the girl with the roses stepped out upon the platform. The little audience in the waiting room held its breath. The accompanist struck a few notes on the piano, and then came floating in to the knot of listeners a feeble wail of violin-strings. The piano strove valiantly to do the duty of both instruments for a short period of time, in which Winifred came to appreciate the truth of Hermann's comparison regarding the mouse, and then, to an equally feeble sound of applause, the performer reëntered.

In the hall, Hermann was holding his handerchief to his lips, while Gretel admonished him in a whisper not to laugh, and Bolinski, Weiss, and all the musicians present were avoiding so much as the slightest glance at the face of Rohricht.

The next pupil was a pretty child of nine,

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who was too young to be self-conscious, and whose clever playing brought out a hearty recognition from the assembly. The particularly nervous girl followed, but though timid, she was talented, and after a minute of shaky playing, settled down to really good work. Everybody clapped again. Now appeared a boy of thirteen on the platform. Bert Beaconside, sitting with his sister and college crony in a foremost position, moved restlessly, and stifled a yawn.

"I shall be glad when we get through the preliminaries," he muttered.

Elsa laughed. "You think it's Freda's concert, don't you?"

"Of course it's Freda's concert. The others are bores. That little kid's not bad, though," as the small boy bowed away gallantly.

"Well, you must curb your impatience; Freda is last of all."

And finally, having tried with what suc-

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cess one may imagine, to curb his feelings, Bert was rewarded. The door of the waiting room opened, and Winifred in her white dress, with the scarlet columbines in her belt, was dropping a reverence to her first audience. It seemed to her in that moment that she was looking at a sea — a sea of faces; a sea that wavered dimly as she looked at it. Her eyes were very wide, but she had never seen less clearly, and in her ears was the sound of a cataract. In a sort of dream she adjusted her violin, and with a hand that trembled, began to play.

The audience looked approvingly at her. "Very pretty." "Stands gracefully." "Sweet expression of face," people whispered to each other.

But as her hand grew steady, and the first movement of Spohr's concerto took form, the merely complacent interest in the faces before her changed. It was interest of another kind, now — interest keen and vivid;

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interest which made certain distinguished musical personages and well-known critics straighten up in the chairs where they had been lounging and watch intently the fine, slenderly moulded hand that passed the bow across the strings. Winifred's first pause was greeted with the warmest plaudits yet given. Bolinski, Hermann, and Barthold Weiss vying with Bert Beaconside and Andy Carew in clapping. The enthusiasm grew as, all shyness forgotten in the delight of playing, and as she unaffectedly knew, playing her very best, the young violinist developed her masterpiece. Rohricht's face was not now a thing at which his friends avoided looking. Beaming with the most affectionate pride and crimson with emotion, it was well worth looking at, and Gretel felt a warm tear in each blue eye as she gazed at her father.

"He is so glad,—so glad for Fredachen!" she thought to herself.

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Perhaps at that moment she was the only person who was not gazing at, and thinking of, Winifred. Hermann, who could not see her with his bodily eyes, sat leaning forward as if he could; and to judge from the smile on his lips, it was a lovely picture that he saw in his own mind.

And now she was playing the last movement; and now — it was done.

Winifred lowered her bow, smiled at the wildly clapping assemblage, dropped her pretty curtsey, and disappeared. But they were not satisfied, the friends new and old; they must see her again. Overcome with surprise, scarcely believing the truth, she came out on the platform once more. People clapped more vociferously; some one shouted aloud, —

"Brava! bravissima!" and she saw the gypsy countenance of Bolinski all aglow. Some one near him was waving a hand to attract her attention: it was her old teacher,

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Mr. Lane, looking almost as excited and delighted.

And there was Bert — and there was Elsa — and farther back the dear, dear Rohrichts, Gretel quite frankly crying for joy, and Hermann, with a splendid color in his cheeks, standing up to applaud. She could distinguish people now; it was a mere sea of faces no longer. As she was about to retire for the second time, an usher advanced rapidly along the aisle, and handed up a superb bouquet of American Beauties, tied with wide pink ribbon. At the same moment, Bert, who had been glancing over his shoulder with anxious eyes, smiled, and looked back to Winifred.

"She's got them!" he murmured with a sigh of relief. "I thought that duffer had forgotten what I told him."

Another bouquet — white roses, this time — was brought forward. Winifred smiled her pleasure, and with arms full of flowers,

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and ears of applause, made her escape. Even then her audience made so much noise, that she was obliged to drop one last curtsey before they would lose sight of her finally.

Then the little waiting room was invaded by a rush of kindly folk, friends and relatives of the various pupils, and Winifred was surrounded.

Elsa must hug and kiss her, and Gretel and Frau Rohricht; and there were Bert and Mr. Lane and Anna and Barthold with greetings. Franz Bolinski and Hermann were waiting their turn outside. It was a wonderful time.

"*Ach*, Fredachen!" her teacher said when they were quietly back at home, "thou hast given me much happiness to-day!"

And coming to her, he took her face, shy, wondering still, in his two hands, and quite solemnly stooped and kissed her on the forehead.

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CHAPTER XIII.

Lilac-time.

MR. Lane waited over a day in Boston to take Winifred home.

The day after the concert was a busy one at number forty-eight, for Winifred's belongings had all to be gathered together and packed, and of course, the whole household — with the exception of Rohricht himself — had to look on, advise, and assist. It was rather sorrowful, this packing up to go far away from the dear, kindly people she had grown to know and love so well, and their grief at the parting was even greater than her own; but the thought of home was very sweet, and now she felt ready to go, for she had finished the work she had come away to do.

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The morning papers had in several cases noticed the pupils' concert in friendly terms, and one made special mention of the "sympathetic and really beautiful interpretation of Spohr's '*Gesangscene*' rendered by Miss West," of whom another's musical reporter spoke as "a young lady of a very high order of talent, from whom the public may confidently expect great things in a few years." Bolinski brought in the clippings he had evidently been at some pains to glean, in the evening. Winifred's musical friends had been invited to a little farewell supper, and a cordial rivalry seemed to exist amongst them as to which one should pay her the prettiest compliments and show the heartiest good-will.

Bert Beaconside had been invited to this festivity at Winifred's particular request; though, as Franz remarked in a discontented aside to Barthold Weiss, "the big American boy knew more about football than music."

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By a little tactful supervision of the table, the heroine of the occasion so arranged matters that Bert and Franz sat at opposite sides, and that Bert's seat was next to Gretel's; and thereby made it difficult for the two to clash.

Bert certainly showed a slight annoyance on discovering that the Hungarian gypsy had collected more newspaper praises of Freda's playing than he himself had been able to do; but he had too much good breeding to put it into words, and Bolinski's feelings of satisfaction were only shown in a peculiarly dazzling smile.

Toward the end of the supper, Herr Rohricht got upon his feet and made a very charming short speech, in which he spoke of the "lovely and much-loved young girl who had honored his roof with her presence for some weeks past," and went on to say that "of all the many young people he had had the privilege of instructing in the mys-

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teries of the noblest musical instrument in the world, none, he could assert, had ever so richly rewarded the pains he had taken, and of none had he so full a measure of joy. Of none, moreover, had he so absolutely the confidence that a future lay before her."

These were wonderful words from Rohricht, — Rohricht, whose highest praise was generally a curt "not so bad," — and the subject of them felt her cheeks burn with surprise and gratification. Loud applause greeted the speaker as he sat down again, and now it was Bolinski who sprang to his feet. He lifted his glass high in air.

"To the Alpine Fay! To the spirit of the spring! To Freda!" he cried with shining eyes; and all the little company rose with their glasses in their hands and cried, "To Freda!" and touched glasses all round. Then some one said, "The Fräulein must say something," and every voice echoed, "Yes, yes; she must say something!"

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Winifred looked appealingly at her friends with her soft, shy, brown eyes, but they would not let her off. "Say something — say something!" they repeated, laughing and nodding their heads encouragingly at her.

With a great effort she rose, and, resting one hand lightly on the table, looked at her first teacher, Mr. Lane, and then at her last, the big, beaming German.

"I — I don't quite know what to say," she began timidly; "you are all so kind — so good — and I really don't deserve half the nice things you have been saying. If I have done at all well, it is the two dear, patient men who have taught me whom you ought to praise," her eyes looked a little dim. "Perhaps the best way to thank every one of my friends is to promise those two, before all the rest, that I mean to do my best in the way they have taught me." She sat down amid great acclamation, and Mr. Lane

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bowed to Herr Rohricht, and Herr Rohricht to Mr. Lane, with his hand on his heart. Altogether, it was a most successful evening, and a delightful wind-up to a happy winter.

They were all at the station to see her off next morning — that is to say, Rohricht, Hermann, Gretel, Bert, and Bolinski. The latter thrust a roll of paper into Winifred's hand just as he was leaving the car.

"You shall play it over by and by at your home," he said; "I wrote it for you. I have called it — '*Auf Wiedersehen!*'"

Bert could not compose pieces for the violin, but he could buy heaps of illustrated weeklies and monthlies, and consoled himself with the reflection that these would be more entertaining on a long railway journey than manuscript music — in which, perhaps, he was over-confident.

So the train rolled away, and Winifred, waving her handkerchief from the open window, saw rather confusedly the little group

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of friendly faces that smiled upon her to the last, for the tears in her eyes. It was hard to say good-by.

"You didn't want to stay on in Boston, did you?" asked Mr. Lane, with a quick glance at her face and off again.

"Oh, no!" came the ready answer from her heart. "I didn't want to stay; it was the right time to go home — but I hate good-byes, don't you?"

Mr. Lane smiled. "I hated to say good-by to my pupil last fall. It feels pretty nice to think of teaching you again, Freda. But I must remember that you are not the little beginner you were once upon a time, and that you have had a better teacher than I."

Winifred's only answer was to lay her hand lightly on his arm as he sat beside her, and smile up at him.

"Well, yes, you are a loyal little girl, and if you find me behind the times — why, you must tell me so," he said.

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If Winifred had had a group of loving friends to see her go away from Boston, what shall be said of the group that waited in excitement the most intense, for her arrival at the little station in East Village?

It seemed as if the rush of the embracing arms would bear her off her feet as she reached the platform, and she was rosy and breathless as she emerged from all the huggings and kissings at last. Dr. West had driven over in the old buggy, and Ethel and Mollie had come too, and Hal had carried Sid on his bicycle — a really remarkable feat, when one considered everything.

And the children had decorated the buggy with flowers — the sweet, well-remembered Westholme flowers — while streamers of red, white, and blue ribbon flew from the old horse's ears and the top of the whip.

"And Sid wanted to play 'See, the

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conquering hero comes,' but could not manage it," Dr. West said.

"No; and besides, she isn't a hero,—she's a heroine!" Sidney added. For Mr. Lane had sent those newspaper accounts ahead of Winifred's return, and the news of her great success had become the property of the village by this time. As they drove along, heads were nodded, kind greetings called out, and with her father by her side and Ethel at her feet, and Mollie in her lap with both arms around her neck, Winifred realized that she was really at home. The double-loaded bicycle running beside the carriage, now on one side and now on the other, made a fine escort, and that the element of music should not be lacking, Sidney from time to time let forth ear-piercing blasts on a mouth-whistle.

"That's just to let them know you're coming!" he explained.

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Miss Smithers, the village dressmaker, ran out to her gate as the buggy and its outriders drew near. She was waving a breadth of blue cashmere wildly as a signal for them to stop.

"Say, I want to tell ye how good it is to see ye back, Freda West!" she cried. "And my! how you grow to favor your pa!"

Winifred leaned out and shook hands. "You look nicely, Miss Smithers," she said in return.

"Well, I'm so's to be round," was Miss Smither's admission. "I'm comin' up to the house to hear all the news an' about the city styles," she concluded, and gathering up her banner of blue cashmere returned to her cottage.

"What's city styles?" Ethel inquired with interest of her sister.

Winifred laughed. "Something I'm afraid I don't know much about," she said. "I like violin-styles better!"

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And so the triumphal entry into Westholme was accomplished.

Mother was standing between the big lilac bushes, purple and white, at the gate, as the carriage drew up. She did not say one word as she gathered her girl close to her breast, but her girl understood.

And behind Mrs. West, who should come running but Lucinda! Lucinda, as rosy-cheeked as ever, with a new dress on, combining an even greater variety of colors than was usual in the case of Lucinda's dresses; and it was the same hard, honest hand that grasped Winifred's, and which its owner instantly withdrew with the remark: —

"Well, there, — excuse stickiness, but I was so glad to hear the wheels, I just run out in the middle of my molasses gingerbread!"

"And you don't know all the things we're going to have for supper because

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you've come back!" shouted Sidney, who, dismounted from the perils of Hal's bicycle, now frisked around Winifred like a wild Indian.

"Come and see my rabbits!" he added abruptly.

"No, come and see my kittens!"

"No, come in the house and see my new dolly!"

"The first thing is to let sister go up and take off her things in her own room," said mother, who had never let go one moment of her daughter's hand.

"Oh, how nice it is to hear that!" Winifred said with a pleased little sigh. "No one has called me 'sister' for such a long time!"

How restful the old room looked! She walked to the window which had the view, and gazed away to the blue mountains, as still and beautiful as ever. Certain words

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from a grand old book floated through her memory: "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help." "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever."

Truly, the Lord had been with her, guarding and guiding her, all these long months since she left her home to go to a strange city; and He it was who had preserved her from dangers, and brought her back in peace to find all her loved ones well and safe. It was a fervent word of thanksgiving which went up from her grateful heart as she stood looking away to the hills that seemed always in their height and their distance and their calm, near to heaven.

The little angel was still playing his mandolin on the wall. Freda nodded to him as to an old friend. "You won't

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be so lonely in future," she thought; "St. Cecilia is going to be beside you."

It was very pleasant to sit down to the supper-table a little later with her own people; to hear Hal's talk of "the fellows at school," and Sidney's and Ethel's good-natured sparring. All the children had grown, and Baby was a baby no longer, and had learned to speak only too plainly, except for one or two words, and for the "w" instead of the "r" in "Freda."

"I thought you didn't mean to come home ever any more, Fweda, — you stopped in Boston such a long time!" she said across the table, with a droll little air of reproach; then, with an evident second thought —

"But you was learning your vi'lin, — wasn't you?"

"Yes, pet; that was it, — or I wouldn't have left my Mollie so long."

Mrs. West sat behind the tea-tray, saying

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little, but feasting her eyes on Winifred. After supper, and when the little ones were in bed, she led her daughter into the parlor, and sat down beside her on the couch. The doctor had been sent for to visit a patient, and Hal, with his Greek exercises, had gone upstairs to study.

"Now, I want to hear all about everything, my little girl," said the mother. Winifred put her head down on the old place where she had so often nestled it in the by-gone days.

"Now that I am back here, it all seems like a sort of dream!" she whispered.

"Tell me the dream, then, sweetheart!"

So Winifred told it; and as the mother listened, sometimes she smiled, and sometimes she sighed; and once — as the story of the blind boy was given — the tears stood in her eyes. When it was finished — though, indeed, as Winifred said, it was impossible to tell it all at one sitting — Mrs.

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West put both arms around the slight young figure, and kissed the sweet face. She was thinking many thoughts, — mother-like; but all she said was: —

"You did right to go away, my dear; and I would let you go again; but oh, my Freda, my Freda, — I'm glad to have you back!"

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